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Professionalisation and decision making in higher education management: new collegiality and academic change

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Professionalisation and Decision Making in Higher Education Management: New Collegiality and Academic Change

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Abstract

This study discusses the professionalisation of higher education management and emerging patterns of decision making within a context of academic and organisational change. A total of thirty interviews were conducted across six Universities, with five similar roles interviewed in each institution. Respondents were drawn from both centralised and decentralised parts of the organisation, and represented both academic and professional services perspectives. Three ideas are proposed. The first is an emerging *New Collegiality* in which decision making behaviour is developing that reflects traditional collegial debate, but within new peer groups of academic and professional services managers. Academic managers are also using *New Collegiality* to share good management practice, with new organisational combinations offering new forms of collaborative working within and across subject disciplines. A second theme proposes that a *Higher Education Professional Services Framework* exists, which has situationally contingent characteristics that are unique to the professional services in higher education. These features combine decision making and management behaviours to operate as a singular body positioned throughout the organisation in context specific ways. Finally, a third concept identifies *three linked levers of management* used by the centre to address tensions of internal demands for decentralisation against the external pressures to centralise. These linked levers consist of the creation of an intermediate tier such as a faculty or college, a proactive use of management information as an evidential tool for decision making, and a particular use of the *Higher Education Professional Services Framework*. The findings suggest that Universities are ostensibly decentralising their organisational structures while simultaneously centralising decision making authority through changes in accountability. These trends raise a number of relevant issues to the professionalisation of higher education.

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1 Chapter One - Introduction

1.1 The context of the investigation

Higher education in the United Kingdom (UK) has historically been predicated on Universities as autonomous institutions with expectations that a small proportion of the population would enter higher education. The sector was largely free from government intervention and able to rely on predictable and uninterrupted public funding. During the past three decades there has been a shift towards mass higher education, with much greater levels of government steerage. Current cuts in public funding linked with increased tuition fees signal an increasing market effect, with the added complexity of a diversifying student body and competition from an increasing range of higher education providers. This environment can be discussed along three current contextual characteristics:

- Shifts from elite to mass higher education
- Expanding government intervention and regulation of the higher education sector
- Growing influence of a quasi market in higher education, with a diversified student body and increased competition from providers

These factors combine in particular ways to create an environment that is turbulent, resource constrained, competitive, increasingly regulated and where the sector is the subject of intense public scrutiny and comment.

Shifts from elite to mass higher education

The UK has a strong tradition of elite Universities that held autonomy as a prerequisite for their contribution to society in the form of intellectual advancement and cultural expansion. It was accepted that the independence of Universities served a social purpose as part of an elite system based on particular values and culture, using expert knowledge that could not be obtained elsewhere. The shift from elite to to mass higher education has occurred primarily in the past three decades. In 1972, there were 530,000 full and part time students studying at UK Universities, which comprised 10% of the eligible student population (Lauwerys 2002). This has steadily increased

to 1.96 million full and part time students in 2009, and now comprises 44% of the eligible student population of 18-30 year olds (HESA 2010). In distinguishing between elite and mass systems of higher education, Scott uses Trow's definitions of an elite system that enrols up to 15% of the age group, mass systems as those which enrol between 15% and 40%, and universal systems whereby over 40% of the age group are enrolled (Scott 1995). Evolution to a mass higher education system is complex and not simply about increases in student numbers or political changes, rather it is an outcome of wider modernising trends in society, politics and culture, as well as in the academy. Although governments have pushed the mass higher education agenda, this has been implemented without an increase in the unit of resource (Dearlove 1998). Growing student numbers have inevitably affected the scale and complexity of higher education, and systems that were fit for purpose with a smaller student population now face increasing challenges (Deem 2000; Dearlove 2002; Lauwerys 2002; Lambert 2003; Yielder and Codling 2004). It appears that elite systems enjoy a high degree of autonomy, whereas mass systems attract political attention and intervention through funding and legislation.

Expanding government intervention and regulation

Government intervention and legislation takes a number of forms, including steerage through the Funding Councils and the Quality Assurance Agency. The principle of tuition fees was introduced in 2004 with a maximum tuition fee of £3,125 per year, and variation from this was rare. Most institutions charged the maximum amount so a market driven by fees did not arise. There are two key differences between government funding in 2004 and the current position. Firstly, student loans were highly subsidised and were not intended as part of a wider attempt to reduce expenditure. Secondly, institutional fee income was additional to other funding, as no cuts were imposed by the government. In 2011, the present regime is driven by cuts in funding higher education as part of wider cuts to public expenditure overall, with a clear switch from direct (grants) to indirect (tuition fees) forms of funding. The programme includes 80% cuts to the teaching grant, combined with an increased tuition fee to between £6,000 and £9,000 per year.

Government intervention is likely to increase, with political steerage where the state identifies and then controls the crucial rules of engagement. For example, the maximum level of tuition fee will be prescribed, with legislation on the repayment regime for students. Furthermore, government will allocate additional funding to disciplines that are defined as “strategic subjects” including the sciences, technology, mathematics, engineering and others. State controlled allocation of research funding will explicitly favour research intensive Universities over other parts of the sector, and there appears to be a government desire to define leading Universities and then resource them as centres of excellence. For weaker institutions, government cuts may result in institutional failures or mergers and the state will inevitably become involved with the management of such outcomes. Overall, government intervention in these areas is likely to grow as the language used increasingly moves from “funding” to “investment” in higher education. Significantly, an intentional restratification agenda may well emerge.

As well as steerage through funding, other government drivers are increasing accountability through quality assurance regimes with greater public scrutiny. Higher education will need to justify itself in the growing competition for scarce public resources and the links between quality and public funding will become more explicit. There are increased national requirements for a range of information to be made publically available, and then subject to a judgement in institutional audits conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency. These factors combine to significantly increase the pressure on institutions. Shifts to mass higher education overseen by targeted government intervention combined with increased tuition fees to offset significant cuts in funding, has led to the development of a quasi market in UK higher education.

The growing influence of a market in higher education

It could be argued that a partial market in higher education already exists, as students already exercise some degree of choice when they select certain institutions, or rule themselves out from applying to others. However, higher education does not have a true market as it is one managed by the government through the setting of tuition fees and other targeted legislation,

in this way it is a quasi market. Tuition fees are not price sensitive and success will be determined by an institution's true market position, research profile, geography and subject mix. This quasi market in higher education can be examined along two broad strands, the increasing demands of a diversified student body and the expanding number and type of providers of higher education. The student body is increasing in size and diversification, and alongside the standard UK undergraduate model of 18-21 year old students studying full time programmes on campus, students of varying ages increasingly study off campus at a distance, and part time. Cuts in funding have led many institutions to recruit international students and charge them significantly higher fees, which has had a fundamental impact on the nature and differentiation of the student body. In terms of increasing the range of providers, if current government funding favours the elite institutions there is also a parallel intention to encourage other providers such as Further Education Colleges to deliver higher education, which will further stratify the sector. Although many institutions will charge the full £9,000 fee, some post-1992 institutions may join the Further Education Colleges in offering tuition fees towards the £6,000 end of the scale. A growing number of private providers of higher education are seeking degree awarding powers, and this will also pose a significant challenge to traditional providers across the sector. There are choices facing universities as they aim to diversify successfully into rapidly evolving markets, and over-extension can lead to potential loss of quality and focus as well as financial difficulty (Davies 2001). Robertson also questions whether organisations can cope with competing forces of market responsiveness, against a climate of increased accountability (Robertson 1993). However, given significantly reduced state funding, the argument that an entrepreneurial approach is essential to the success of Universities (Clark 1998, 2004), gains more momentum. Increases in student fees are likely to strengthen the consumer element of the student's relationship with an institution, and potentially expand demands accordingly.

The higher education sector therefore faces complex problems of growing and diversifying demand from an increasingly influential student body, at the same time as government is cutting funding to institutions and increasing their accountability. The state is not simply reducing overall costs, it is encouraging

a range of providers of higher education in both the public and private sectors. In addressing these problems, the options available to Universities are to remove themselves from the public sector funding regimes for teaching and research to become wholly private institutions. The Universities who could consider this would be those without heavy reliance on Funding Council income, with a broad portfolio of external income generation and a world class research base. Also, these institutions would need reputational strength to withstand the initial uncertainty that such a move out of the public sector of a major UK University might create. Alternatively, institutions can raise expectations of their staff to take on more teaching or research responsibilities. This might have the effect of stretching teaching resources more widely in times of constrained budgets, but it is a partial solution, as gains in one area may lead to opportunity costs in other areas. A third option is for higher education institutions to subcontract certain functions such as teaching to the private sector to allow other staff more time for research, reduce staffing costs or increase staff flexibility. This could raise a number of workforce issues and might be ideologically contentious for the academic community as a whole.

So far, these approaches to dealing with current contextual challenges have not been fully explored by the sector although this may change in the future. Academic managers are not well placed to address such significant challenges to institutional and individual autonomy as their primary expertise has been developed within academic subject areas. This has led to the emergence of professional services managers with a specific skill set in managing institutional engagement with the environment. Universities are complex organisations with varying levels of centralisation and devolution of decision making authority, and this has a significant bearing on management. To navigate through turbulent environments where reduced resources are limiting the range of options available, institutions will need to develop approaches to decision making that professionalise both their organisations and their staff. The research topic is set within this context.

1.2 The aims of the study

This investigation aims to explore how Universities establish organisational structures to support academic governance with devolved or centralised decision making authority. It will attempt to increase understanding of the roles and boundaries of professional services managers, but also how changes are taking place within the academic body as it adapts to expanding pressures. These factors taken together aim to build an overview of current developments in the professionalisation of higher education.

The substantive aims of the study are:

- To identify changes taking place in the roles of professional services managers, and to assess the impact on institutional decision making
- To evaluate the effects of centralised or devolved organisational structures on how managers make decisions within such complexity
- To understand more of the changing relationships between academic and professional services staff in relation to academic governance
- To bring these three aims together to gain an appreciation of the dynamics of the professionalisation of higher education

The theoretical aim is to construct a framework using theories drawn from the professionalisation of higher education, wider organisational theory, decision making theory and emerging third space theory. Critical realism enables engagement with this conceptual structure in a coherent and meaningful way. A key strength of this perspective is the significance of causation, and the impact of underlying causative factors on explicit events (Sayer 1992; Bhaskar 1997; Cruickshank 2010). In terms of the methodological aims, a qualitative approach will offer a supportive and flexible framework within which to conduct an empirical investigation (Punch 2005; Silverman 2005). This approach is appropriate because it uses contextual and pragmatic methods with a focus on process rather than structures, which is helpful in gaining insight. This is augmented by the reflection required of the researcher when using this methodology. A weakness can be the lack of generalisability, although this can be overcome by careful selection of a representative sample that is studied in depth (Eisenhardt 1989), in this way purposive

sampling underpins a robust research design. Case studies will provide an opportunity to study the topic holistically and in its natural context (Yin 1981), and in particular the "how" and the "why" of any given situation (Meyer 2001). This links particularly well with the causation principles that underpin theories of critical realism, providing alignment between the theoretical and methodological aims for this study. If professional services managers are interpreting their roles more proactively to operate across boundaries and create shifts in decision making, it is reasonable to assume that an increased understanding of these patterns will offer insight into the organisation. The central research question is **"How are the roles and decision making of professional services managers in higher education evolving in relation to organisational structure and academic governance?"** This question should elicit greater understanding into how higher education is professionalising in terms of decision making within complex organisational structures.

Professionalisation is important for several reasons, in a context where resources are tightly constrained, government policy is interventionist and sector turbulence is high, the characteristics that divide strong institutions from those that are less successful will be multi-faceted. Successful institutions are likely to have coherent institutional strategies, astute management expertise and an engaged staff culture across all areas of the organisation. Appropriate professionalisation contributes to the development of all these features within a University. Success is not likely to be based on high profile major decisions but by cumulative smaller decisions that establish consistent trends and organisational behaviour (Shattock 2003). Thriving institutions establish cultures of self belief and confidence, which increases their resilience to the pressures of reducing resource and increasing accountability. Another reason for the relevance of the topic is that Universities need consistently strong organisational and staff performance to adapt to competitive environments. The effective deployment of staff and other resources for maximum benefit to the institution becomes critical, and the professionalisation agenda can enable this. Furthermore, understanding professionalisation develops insight into how higher education is adapting to changing trends, both at institutional and sector level.

1.3 The structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured around six chapters. Chapter two sets out the literature on the professionalisation of higher education management and the influence of identity, discussing links with newly emerging third space theory that itself draws on identity theory. Decision making theory is discussed in a wider sense, and then applied specifically to higher education management. Parallels with organisational structure are explored, with specific reference to centralised organisations in contrast to those where decision making is highly devolved. The chapter ends with the core research question, which itself is then expressed as the four research questions that will underpin the study.

Chapter three discusses the overall methodology and the strengths and weaknesses of establishing a defensible argument. It is an individual account of the steps taken at each stage of the study, with reflection on the methodological choices made. Six case studies based on thirty interviews are discussed, including a research design using purposive sampling of five comparative roles in each of the six institutions which together form a representative sample. The chapter closes with reflection on methodological strengths and weaknesses, lessons learnt and how the method has evolved throughout the study.

Chapter four presents the findings of the investigation. These relate to the changing roles of professional services managers and the effects of University structure on how such roles are evolving. Although the focus of the study is on managers in the professional services and their engagement with the academic community, the findings throw light on how academic manager roles are also changing. Decision making is discussed in terms of centralised or devolved organisational structure, but also how the use of management information is having a significant impact on the implementation of strategic and operational decisions. All findings are mapped back to the research questions using a matrix that sets out an explicit logical framework. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the wider aspects of the professionalisation of higher education, and the notion of social value and shared ownership of higher education by all staff.

Chapter five discusses the implications of the findings and what may be learnt from them. This chapter outlines an original concept of a *higher education professional services framework*, in which it is proposed that a contingently flexible structure uniquely exists within the professional services. It is characterised by three features based on an external and institutional knowledge base, managerial expertise and institutional positioning. These features operate flexibly in a situationally contingent approach, using decision making skills supported by effective interpretation and translation of information in a context specific approach. Further discussion considers shifts in decision making authority and organisational structure, proposing a notion of three levers of management used by the strategic centre to centralise decision making while ostensibly decentralising organisational structure. An outcome of this organisational behaviour is increased accountability of the departments to the centre, both directly and via the intermediate tier. Discussion around the implications of the professionalisation of both professional services and academic managers leads to a concept of a *New Collegiality*, with observations on the sustainability of the rotational Head of Department role for academic managers. The commentary reflects on the potential limitations of the study, how they have been explored, and what impact such limitations may have had on the conduct of the investigation and any subsequent findings.

Chapter six outlines the broader aspects of organisational structure, decision making and professionalisation. There is an evaluation of the achievement of the substantive aims and their success against the theoretical frameworks. The application of the findings to a broad context is considered and potential directions for future research are suggested, alongside recommendations for professional practice at a number of levels withininstitutions.

The relevant literature offers significant insight into established and emerging theory. The next chapter explores this body of knowledge using a conceptual framework to critically evaluate and build on what is already known, identifying where gaps exist that may be addressed by this particular study.

2 Chapter Two - Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Chapter one sets out a complex context where higher education is adapting to a mass rather than an elite system, the student body is growing in influence and is more differentiated, and government is countering the autonomy of the sector by active steerage through the Funding Councils and Quality Assurance Agency. As the higher education environment becomes more complex it increasingly impinges on institutions. The academic body is not well placed to address these increasing challenges as their primary expertise is in subject disciplines. So as Universities lose autonomy from outside forces, academic staff within institutions lose autonomy as well. This creates a need for a body of professional services staff with a specific skill set in managing institutional engagement with the environment. Such activity is taking place within complex organisations that have varying levels of centralisation and devolution of decision making authority, and this potentially has a significant bearing on effective management. Consequently, this study requires an exposition of four areas of literature: Professionalisation in relation to higher education, emerging *Third Space* literature, decision making theory and organisational theory.

The literature will be examined using a hierarchy of questions set at appropriate levels. The core research question establishes a central enquiry from which the review questions are drawn. The research questions emerge from a critical evaluation of current theory the literature, at a level of detail to answer perceived gaps in current understanding. The core research question is **"How are the roles and decision making of professional services managers in higher education evolving in relation to organisational structure and academic governance?"** Four review questions have been articulated against each other as a matrix which serves two purposes, firstly it enables the identification of suitable bodies of literature to investigate further, and exclude other literature that is less relevant. Secondly, the matrix enables the generation of appropriate and relevant research questions that are explicitly linked to the evaluation of the literature.

Table 1 Review Questions mapped against the Theoretical Framework

Review Questions	What Changes in the Boundaries of Professional Services Management are taking place?	What are the Effects of Organisational Structure on Management Activity?
How are the Roles of Professional Services Managers evolving?	***Literature sources*** ***Professionalisation in HE*** ***Third Space Theory (Identity, New Managerialism)*** ***1***	***Literature sources*** ***Organisational Theory (Structure, Management)*** ***2***
What are the changes taking place in Decision Making by Professional Services Managers?	***3*** ***Literature sources*** ***Professionalisation in HE*** ***Third Space Theory (Identity, New Managerialism)*** ***Decision Making Theory***	***4*** ***Literature sources*** ***Decision Making Theory*** ***Organisational Theory (Structure, Management)***

Four areas of the professionalisation of higher education management, third space theory, decision making theory and organisational theory will each be examined in turn.

2.2 The Professionalisation of higher education management

Several features permeate the context of higher education, each of which is significant, but taken together create a rapidly evolving and challenging environment to which institutions must adapt. These are the shift from elite to mass higher education, increased regulation by government, the growing influence of a diversified student body and a competitive market.

The shift from 10% in 1972 to 44% of the eligible student population of 18-30 year olds in 2009, is taking place alongside commensurate expectations by both national governments and the students themselves (Tight 2003; Blanden and Machin 2004). This has had a major impact on the scale and complexity of higher education (Deem 2000; Dearlove 2002; Lauwerys 2002; Lambert 2003; Yielder and Codling 2004), and has been accompanied by increases in external regulation and governance creating a loss of institutional autonomy (Scott 1995; Salter 2002; Shattock 2006). In particular, Salter makes the links between the impact on internal governance of external pressures, endorsing the views of Lauwerys. While there is a general sense of increased regulation, Hodgson draws a distinction between regulation and accountability, arguing that the sector as a whole is less regulated but more accountable (Hodgson 2006). Increasing levels of accountability pose challenges when Universities are also seeking a level of competitive flexibility to adapt to changing markets. There are choices facing institutions as they aim to diversify successfully into rapidly evolving markets, and over-extension can lead to potential loss of quality and focus as well as financial difficulty (Davies 2001). A counter view is that an entrepreneurial approach is fundamental to success of Universities (Clark 1998, 2004), although Robertson questions whether organisations can cope with the competing forces of market responsiveness against a climate of increased accountability (Robertson 1993). Systems of management and governance that were appropriate to deal with the environment of twenty or thirty years ago are less equipped to deal with this complexity. This creates a need for higher education management to professionalise both in terms of a collective organisational approach and as individual managers. For the purposes of this study, professional services managers are defined as those managers who

hold a role within the professional services most directly linked with academic administration and governance. This will include, for example, managers working in Registry, Quality, Planning, as well as managers and administrators working in academic departments to support teaching and learning. Academic managers include Pro Vice Chancellors, Deans or Heads of Department. The study focuses on the operation of key roles within the professional services, rather than the individual experience of role holders, which could be academic or administrative. This is an appropriate approach given the focus of the research questions on the activity of professional services managers, rather than their backgrounds.

Professionalisation in the higher education context

It is arguable that much of the literature on professionalisation relates to the ability of the professional bodies to accredit and empower their members, but this does not necessarily have particular salience in the higher education sector. The wider characteristics of professionalisation include the possession of a body of knowledge, the ability to self regulate and a shared service ethic. A number of insights emerge on the constitution of a body of knowledge and self regulation, but the shared service ethic of professionalisation is less explicit. The variance in the literature could reflect a value stance in the definition of what constitutes a service ethic, as this may mean something fundamentally different between one group and another.

Gornitzka and Larsen use four criteria to define professionalisation in higher education, these include a rise in formal status, an increase in formal educational requirements for appointment, emergence of a common cognitive basis, and the growth and formalisation of networks between individuals (Gornitzka and Larsen 2004). Of these four criteria, the authors identify the rise in formal status as being the most critical, highlighting that this has taken place at middle management level as a clear pattern in the professional services. Informal internal and external networks are being created and diversification of responsibilities is taking place. The study is robust in that it has captured trends over time as a longitudinal study conducted over two decades, however the data relate to Norwegian Universities only so national

context factors may be relevant. Di Maggio and Powell support Gornitzka and Larsen by highlighting that professionalisation aims to establish a cognitive base to conduct roles, and legitimation for occupational autonomy to define conditions and methods of work (Di Maggio and Powell 1983). Similar notions of using content and control to shape occupational professionalisation in higher education are also defined (Noordegraaf 2007), where content is based on a shared body of knowledge that individuals take time to acquire, they use standardised skills to apply that knowledge, and they act according to a shared service ethic. Established criteria have largely been based on occupational professionalism, but Noordegraaf argues that this is changing to include hybrid professionalism, which calls for interdisciplinary knowledge and interactive skills. Such professionals know how to operate in settings that cannot be organised easily. This resonates with the "hybrid professional" identified by Whitchurch within higher education (Whitchurch 2006). Another aspect of professionalism is situated professionalism, where professional autonomies still exist, but are subject to organisational and financial constraints, and are embedded within organisational systems (Noordegraaf 2007). This is reflected by Di Maggio and Powell, who build further on individual situated professionalisation by linking the effect of groups of knowledge workers to institutional isomorphism, and similarity of organisations as they respond to similar environmental demands (Di Maggio and Powell 1983).

The professionalisation of the professional services

There is growing evidence of a professionalisation process of higher education administrators and managers. Current theory proposes that roles are being interpreted more proactively, there are possible shifts of authority (Gornall 1999; Conway 2000; Dobson 2000; Lauwerys 2002; Bacon 2009; Deem 2010), and there is evidence of the blurring of professional boundaries and the emergence of a knowledge base for professional staff (Whitchurch 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008 a-d, 2009). In broad terms, professionalisation is depicted positively in the practitioner literature (Gornall 1999; Conway 2000), with developmental benefits for professional identities and careers (Whitchurch 2007, 2009). This positivity contrasts with some of the academic

literature, which can be far more negative in tone (Lewis and Altbach 1996). Discussion on “fractures” as fault lines can highlight the suspicion that some academic staff have of managers, with tensions between academic ethos and management values (Rowland 2002). In evaluating this stance, it is useful to note that the academic literature is often unclear about how it defines “administration” and “administrators”, whereas the administrative literature shows a greater level of consistency. Bassnett highlights a necessity for academics and administrators to work closely together to guarantee academic quality (Bassnett 2005). Increasing movement is taking place across the academic and administrative divide, with some academic staff moving into administration and many administrators possessing higher degrees (Bassnett 2004). Increasing staff qualifications is an additional indication that the higher education professional services are professionalising. The development of associations such as the Academic Registrar’s Council (ARC) and the Association of University Administrators (AUA) reflect this trend. The AUA has developed a Code of Standards to promote core professional values, the association has also established a professional development framework and created recognised qualifications that reflect a body of knowledge. A quarterly journal “Perspectives, Policy and Practice in Higher Education” demonstrates peer review of articles that discuss key national and professional developments.

Currently, the nomenclature used for the professional services means they have been defined by what they are not, that is “non-academic” staff, which can be exclusionary and have negative connotations. This is evidenced in both institutional and national reports (Gornall 1999; Conway 2000; Dobson 2000; Lambert 2003). Rather than conferring the ethos of public service values and integrity as it once did in a civil service model of administration, the term “administrator” has become devalued and is now associated with routine clerical work (Whitchurch 2004). Reasons for this shift are complex and not always readily apparent but may be exacerbated by resource constraints, where managers implement institutional restrictions within an increasingly turbulent environment. Administrators are defined literally as those who administer the rules and regulations, and provide a record of institutional precedence and continuity. Such academic administration serves

institutions well during stable environments that permit bureaucracy, but this model cannot cope with rapidly changing external requirements and a new form of professional service needs to be developed. As an evolutionary outcome of this process, the term “professional services” is increasingly replacing “administration” (Whitchurch 2006; Lauwerys 2008)

When considering the professionalisation of the professional services, the underlying perspectives of the academic and the administrative literature become clear. Where the two bodies of literature share a view is that administrators are currently defined by what they are not, where they differ is in the contrasting interpretations of the changing role of administrators. Whereas the administrative literature is overwhelmingly positive, the academic literature ranges across a spectrum of positive to negative. Why this might be is possibly based in the value stance of the professional groups, where the allegiance of the academic professional is primarily to the subject discipline (Deem 2004; Henkel 2005; Delanty 2007), but the allegiance of the professional services is more likely to be to their organisation (Kogan 2000; Rhoades and Sporn 2002; Shattock 2003). Furthermore, although the theoretical basis for the two types of literature is similar, for example using identity and new managerialism theories, how these theories and concepts are interpreted vary from academic and administrative perspectives. An explanation may lie in the intended aim of the literature, with the academic literature mainly adding to theoretical understanding, and practitioner literature aiming for theories in action to improve professional practice. Such underlying assumptions may affect the claims made, and may also reflect a value set that in academic staff is individually based but in administrators is more collectively based.

Although the administrative literature appears more homogenous in its overall approach than the academic literature, there are some noteworthy variants. Gornall proposes that evolving professionalisation is emerging as an issue because new professionals are more closely linked than general administrative work to the academic domains of teaching and learning (Gornall 1999). Conway argues that it is more constructive for administrators to consider why they started to define themselves as professionals, and how

the profession has developed (Conway 2000). The argument is that traditional definitions of professionalism are of questionable value. However, this can be challenged on the grounds that the use of accepted paradigms and definitions provides structured legitimacy when subjected to the scrutiny of a wider audience.

There are a number of themes in relation to status creation and role accretion to illustrate developing professionalisation. In status creation new positions are created that have specialist functions that differ from those already established in higher education. In role accretion, new tasks are added to existing types of function (Gornitzka and Larsen 2004). The proposal is that these are clear indicators of the professionalisation of administration, which reflect and redefine the place of such staff in wider organisational evolution. It could be argued that in the professionalisation of higher education management, both concepts apply. New posts will be created in some areas, and existing roles will be proactively expanded into new areas of activity. Lounsbury explores status creation and role accretion and argues that status creation offers a more committed response to institutional pressures, whereas role accretion seems less substantive (Lounsbury 2001). However, in higher education it is unlikely to be possible to create dedicated roles for every institutional priority, especially during periods of increasing sector complexity. Selective role accretion within higher education is taking place and might actually be a more effective institutional response to rapidly changing environmental demands.

Whitchurch aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of professional identities by mapping this explicitly against four aspects of professional activity such as spaces, knowledges, relationships and legitimacies (Whitchurch 2008b). The shift from managers being gatekeepers of institutional knowledge to actively interpreting and creating new knowledge is key to both individual roles and as a contribution to a collective professionalisation agenda. The emergence of an increasing identity as a corporate body within higher education is reaffirmed by lateral networks between professional services managers across institutions (Deem 2010). This augments the sense of identity beyond institutional boundaries,

extending it to the sector as a whole (Whitchurch 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008a-d), which again suggests an increasing professionalisation. If occupational groups are professionalising, their own perception of the implications becomes significant, as it is likely to affect how they execute roles and define their boundaries with others. Relative identities are evaluated by an examination of how professional managers interpret their identity and how this differs from academic identity, in order to fully understand the nature of engagement with each other.

Influences of identity on professionalisation

Barnett and Di Napoli define identity as "a historical process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction" (Barnett and Di Napoli 2008, p6). It is a reasonable argument that this definition could apply to academic and administrative staff alike. However, the difference may not lie in the way that identity is defined, but in the reference points against which this identity is benchmarked. Academic loyalty is primarily towards the basic academic unit and subject, rather than the University as a whole (Deem 2004; Henkel 2005), whereas professional services staff have a strong sense of corporate responsibility (Shattock 2003). Two types of professional services identity are defined as essential and situational (Bacon 2009). The essential identity of professional services managers is based on their specialism (for example finance or human resources management), to which they have a loyalty akin to the subject loyalty of academic staff. In situational forms of identity, the fundamental driver is the departmental or institutional positioning of the role and how it shapes the individual's identity. This is a persuasive argument, although the literature on new public management challenges the premise by highlighting identity as driven by cultural, performance based and financial targets that are arguably independent of where a role is situated. There is a notion that academic identity yearns for a supposed past "golden era" of stability (Scott 1995; Taylor 2006; Taylor 2007). This creates a sense of loss with a tendency to blame managers and managerialism for this (Taylor 2007), although it is arguable that all groups have their "golden ages" and the academic community is not exceptional. Delanty highlights the tensions between academic individuality and allegiance to the subject discipline above

the institution, noting a need for a cognitive adjustment otherwise staff will suffer from institutional dissonance (Delanty 2007).

Academic and professional services staff share a common perception that the workload of academic staff has increased significantly, and this is likely to shape contemporary identities. Tight argues that academic workload increased in the 1960s and 1970s, but since this time has remained generally static with staff maintaining the same overall levels of research (Tight 2010). The workload distribution within pre and post 1992 Universities has remained consistent, with pre 1992 University staff generally being more research active. Tight suggests that the pressure on academic workloads has come from the impact of growing administrative demands, rather than increased teaching and research workload. If true, this will have a proportionately greater influence on the perceptions of academic staff, whose culture generally does not value the administrative aspects of their role. Academic identity and its engagement with managerial necessities is in a constant state of flux. Deem articulates this particularly well in discussing how academic staff have three typical routes into management (Deem 2000), capturing the ambivalence of academic identity and its relationship with the notion of management. "Career track" managers possess an early and full acceptance of the management role, often as a result of dissatisfaction with teaching or research. "Reluctant managers" are found amongst rotational term Heads of Department, they reject the label of manager and often take on the role because they fear the managerial incompetence of others. "Good citizens" include academic staff who are often at the latter part of their careers, and wish to repay a perceived debt to their institution (Deem 2004, 2010). A recurrent theme throughout the literature is the alignment of academic identity with subject discipline, rather than the institution (Delanty 2007; Taylor 2007). Henkel highlights how the values central to academic identity are the primacy of the discipline and academic autonomy, but also offers a different perspective by proposing that while the value of academic autonomy remains strong, its meaning is changing as the rights of the academic community to determine its own agenda must be set against competing rights (Henkel 1997, 2005).

Understanding the relationship between academic identity and the institution is particularly relevant if professional services managers are seeking to influence institutional priorities. The core business of such managers is to be aware of sector wide initiatives, and they value managerial skills as core to their role. They are therefore much better placed to deal with a disturbed and unpredictable higher education climate, where resources are becoming increasingly constrained. This has implications for relationships as on the one hand as professional services managers are blamed for the problems, but they can also offer strategies for coping by providing potential solutions. Academic and professional services staff have different ways of defining their own identity that sit comfortably in their primary areas of operation, but this might change in shared areas of activity such as academic governance in teaching and learning, which arguably have a more composite identity. McInnis argues that managing the interface between academic staff and the professional services has assumed critical importance (McInnis 1998). The emergence of high profile roles in the professional services have a direct impact on academic autonomy, with a trend of academic staff losing ground as professional services managers make claims to be legitimate partners in the strategic management of the University. This occurs alongside a lack of acknowledgement of the increasingly specialist skills of the professional services. Kogan highlights a changing relationship, as professional managers have gained more power in conjunction with institutional level strengthening its hold over basic units (Henkel 1997; Kogan 2000). Knowledge is becoming increasingly fissiparous, there are shifting views on what constitutes "knowledge" and an increase in the number of stakeholders that create knowledge and so contest how it should be defined (Barnett and Di Napoli 2008). It is also worth considering how the ability to research and create knowledge is shaping the identity of professional services managers, and the implications of this dynamic are potentially significant (Whitchurch 2008d).

The literature points to a striking distinction between individual relationships that are strong at a local level, but do not translate to a collective view of the different groups. Hare and Hare note that although there may be institutional level tensions, there are often valued local relationships at department level (Hare and Hare 2002), this is confirmed by Whitchurch, who argues that there

is a potential dissonance between implicit local and personal appreciation of value and explicit public expressions of worth (Whitchurch 2007). McNay links the singular and the collective in terms of individual identity and surrounding communities (McNay 2005). Kogan draws a similar parallel in terms of the need for separateness in the form of self identity, alongside a desire for connectiveness. Individual academic staff need the institution in a system where resources are tight, workloads are growing and external regulation is becoming more pressing. Institutions rely on individuals for their reputation and income. This mutual dependence depends on the balance of power and the quality of the exchange relationships established (Kogan 2000), and is set against a growing influence of the professional services.

Academic staff seem not to draw the distinction between “administration” and “governance” (Dobson 2000), although external quality audits have given administrators the authority to put pressure on academic staff to adhere to systematic approaches set by the institution. Interestingly, the administrators themselves perceive their own role as strengthening the infrastructure, rather than gaining power over academic staff (Henkel 1997). As resource constraints grow, there is little doubt that the contributory role of administration will be set against its financial costs to the institution (Hogan 2011), as well as its links with the academic community. It is reasonable to anticipate a likely correlation between reduced resource and increased tensions between the identities of the professional services and academic communities (Leslie and Rhoades 1995; Lewis and Altbach 1996)

The literature demonstrates a complex picture where engagement between academic and administrative staff is still largely binary in its approach. Emerging theories are developing a concept of an additional domain of activity, identified as the “Third Space” (Whitchurch 2008a), which merits further discussion in terms of its impact on management and decision making.

2.3 The Third Space and its implications for management

Universities operate in a rapidly changing and complex environment, so that fluid institutional structures and boundaries are being developed by new cultural dynamics. Whitchurch reconfigures dual academic and professional domains to describe a third domain, and uses this context to establish a more subtle understanding of the identity and evolving roles of professional managers. Third space is a newly emerging landscape with dynamic and blurred boundaries (Whitchurch 2008a). A key implication of third space theory for this study will be its contribution to the redefinition of professional articulations in terms of decision making and influence. In addition, the theory highlights the development of new ways of working that are largely based in specific project areas, but may become more mainstream. Finally, there may well be significant effects of third space theory on professional identities, and how academic and administrative staff perceive each other. These dynamics are unfolding in situations of organisational and environmental turbulence.

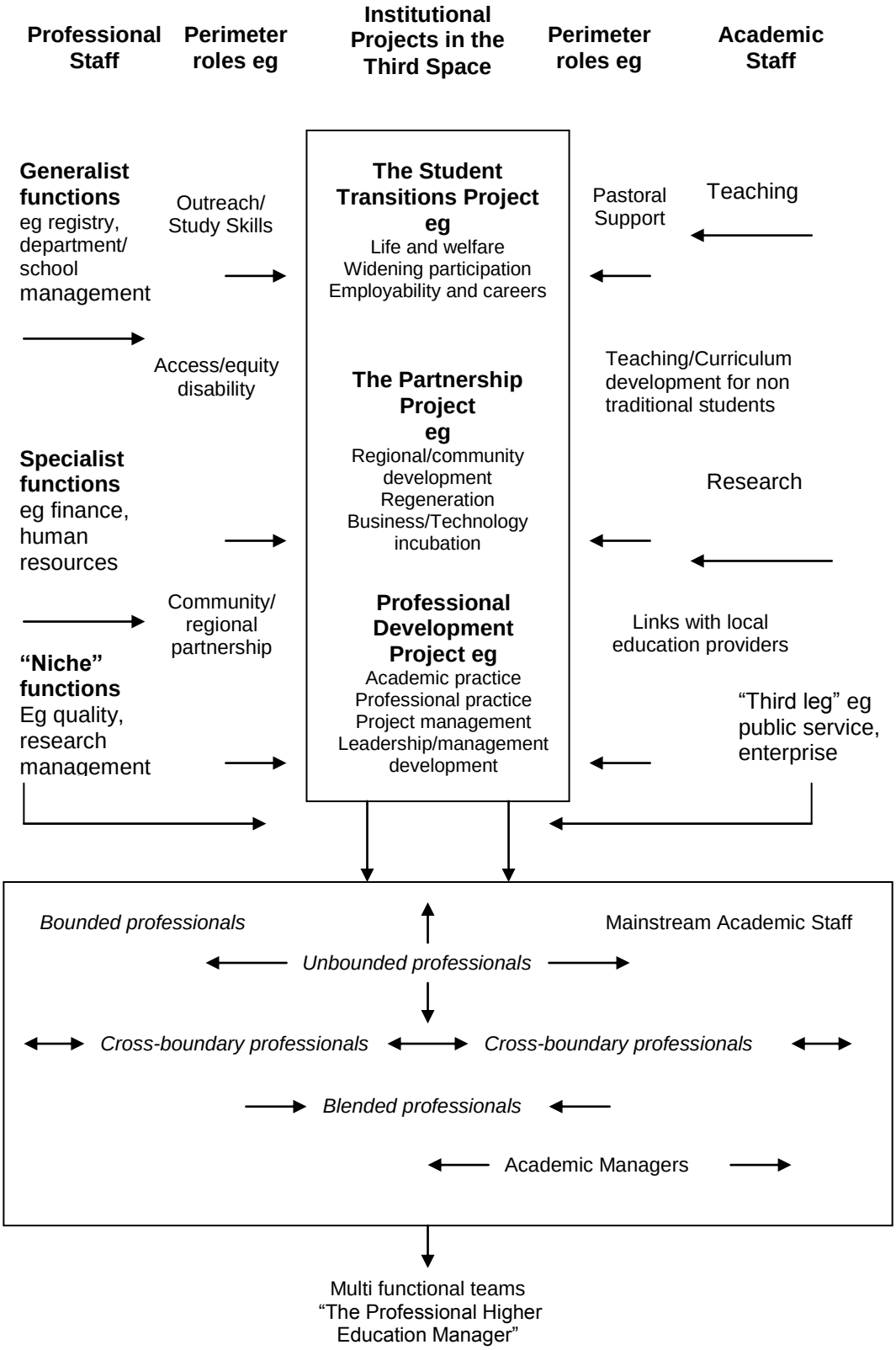
Characteristics of the Third Space

As institutions have had to respond to changes in the higher education environment, the roles and identities of professional services managers have shifted, so that they become more interpretive and shape institutional priorities. In particular, these managers know how and when to connect with governance structures, and they play a key role in linking academic and executive decision making. This knowledge equips professional services managers to become the “critical link” (Whitchurch 2004), as they move into hybrid roles that operate effectively in both academic and professional services domains. This concept of hybrid professionals is taken further in an exploration of shifting identities by professional services managers who adopt more project oriented roles that cross functional and organisational boundaries (Whitchurch 2006). Identities have traditionally been defined through domains such as professional knowledge, institutional boundaries, and policy requirements of the higher education sector. Whitchurch proposes an emergent project domain as a fourth dimension, which encourages the development of multi-professional staff who are able to work across

boundaries using translational skills to achieve effective outcomes. Key groups are identified for whom role boundaries are a defining principle, so that they are perceived as having *bounded, cross boundary* and *unbounded* characteristics within their professional identities. A further category is described by Whitchurch, which consists of *blended professionals* who undertake both academic and administrative activity. These theories are brought together to argue persuasively that there is an emergent third space that exists between academic and professional services domains (Whitchurch 2008a), which is populated by growing numbers of unbounded and blended professionals in particular, and whose professional identities will increasingly integrate with the identities of academic staff. While the arguments put forward in the paper are applied to UK higher education, it is worth noting that this study is based on interviews conducted in the USA and Australia as well as the UK, and so country specific contexts may apply. Implications of the international dimensions of the findings are explored in greater depth in a subsequent analysis as part of a comparative study between the UK, Australia and the USA (Whitchurch 2009). It is also a reasonable assertion that given the many similarities of the higher educations sectors in these countries, the findings based on interviews in Australia and the USA could be applied to the UK.

Further developments in third space theory are the links drawn between the identities of bounded, cross boundary and unbounded professionals and how they use boundaries to create new professional spaces, knowledges, relationships and legitimacies (Whitchurch 2008b). The emergence of these four dimensions suggest that proactive interpretation of roles and cross functional working are becoming embedded, which Whitchurch argues is further evidenced by a reorientation of the concept of service more towards partnership (Whitchurch 2008c). The emergence of the third space between professional services and academic domains and where the professional roles are located within this, is described overleaf.

Diagram 1 Third Space Professionals in UK Higher Education



A changing higher education workforce map: the emergence of Third Space between professional and academic domains Whitchurch 2008a, p 385

Third space is characterised by a broad range of project working, and is populated by hybrid professionals performing effectively in both academic and administrative areas within fluid organisational structures. When institutional strategy is developed from this area of activity it becomes difficult to tell whether ideas have emerged from managers with a professional services or academic background (Whitchurch 2008a). It could be argued that in true third space activity this does not actually matter, what is important is the outcome for achieving organisational success. Discussing the dual drivers of maintaining regulatory processes and preparing institutions to deal with uncertainty and complexity, Whitchurch uses the concept of identity not just to reflect how individuals identify with others undertaking a similar role, but how they proactively interpret their roles, possessing personal credibility rather than relying on the authority of their positions. This proactive and individual interpretation of identity is fundamental, because if managers simply align themselves synchronously with normative behaviours, the positive changes described the literature are not likely to be achieved.

There is support in the literature for these ideas, Dearlove also highlights a need to avoid the dichotomy between collegiality and managerialism as modes of organisation (Dearlove 2002), and promotes working in partnership. Taylor proposes the idea of a "creative commons" involving 'networking, laterality, hybridity, flexibility, multi-tasking'. This could lead to a 'reinterpretation of collegiality' in a 'community of professionals' (Taylor 2007, p38). The notion of a distinctive community of practice is supported by Deem and Johnson, who note that at senior levels such as Pro Vice Chancellors, academic managers may have more in common with other senior professional managers than they do with other academic staff (Deem and Johnson 2000). The literature suggests that a sense of shared views and understanding is less evident in managers at Head of Department level, and this might be worth exploring in the empirical research to establish if this is still the case. The organisational context is key to distinguishing between managerial work that adds value and work which does not. As in the third space, a looser framework of roles is more important than designated positions (Chapman 2001). The use of informal networks to augment organisational flexibility is also explored by Liebeskind and Oliver, who

propose that informal networks do not make the organisational hierarchy less relevant, but its purpose has shifted, so that instead of a command and control function, the hierarchy provides organisational support for both formal and informal communication that is essential to organisational success (Liebeskind, Oliver et al. 1996). Those managers who occupy boundary roles in the organisation are able to exercise significant influence (Scott and Davis 2007), particularly as these roles are often equipped to cope with high levels of institutional and environmental uncertainty.

If it is accepted that the proposition of the third space holds, some alternative views can also be noted. Other contrasts to the concept of third space suggest three inter-related patterns of relationships between academic and administrative staff, based on professional, differential and fragmentary relationships (Kuo 2009). The study suggests that hybrid working exists, but varies according to the subject under discussion. For example, there is collegial working in intellectual communication, but this becomes a differentiated or fragmentary relationship when discussing resources. Di Maggio and Powell agree that the major recent growth in the professions has been among organisational professionals such as specialised managers (Di Maggio and Powell 1983), however they differ in their analysis of the cause. They argue that organisational and structural units are key drivers for change, as opposed to the proactive shaping of roles by professionals highlighted by Whitchurch. Other literature that could challenge the view of a third space demonstrates less certainty about the concept of hybrid professionalism. Gornitzka and Larsen point to its possible emergence, but then challenge this by noting the clear boundaries drawn between academic and administrative staff, and the deference shown by administrators to academic priority in governance (Gornitzka and Larsen 2004). The data suggest that change happens through elected bodies, rather than through proactive management. The authors do not offer reasons why this should be. For example it could be expected that junior administrators might be more structure bound by formal decision making bodies, however the range of staff studied is extensive and at several levels of seniority throughout the sample institutions. This study is based in Norway, so the categories used may be context specific. Even so the range of staff interviewed is broad, but it contrasts with third space theory

as it does not demonstrate the increasing shifts in boundaries identified by Whitchurch.

Third space and the impact of managerialism

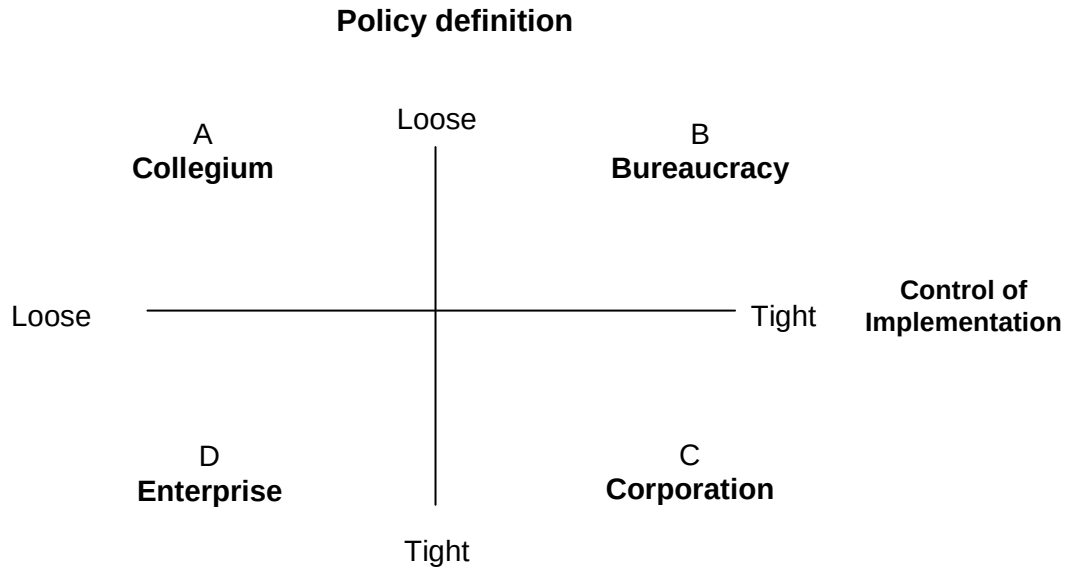
An evaluation of third space theory should consider the impact of managerialism within higher education, and its links with organisational culture. The reasons for this are that organisational culture provides the overarching context within which third space working and managerialism interact. The literature on organisational culture is extensive and would offer a number of themes, however the purpose of this review on concepts of culture, cross referenced to third space and public management literature from the higher education perspective.

Organisational culture is defined in many ways, the definition used for this study is "widely shared and strongly held values" (Chapman 2001). Cultural preferences of managers are significant because they translate across into organisations (Bradley and Parker 2006), managers have an influence on organisational culture, and culture itself can have an influence on organisational and individual outcomes (Marcoulides and Heck 1993). The links between culture and new public management are particularly important given the emphasis on changing public sector organisations to reflect some aspects of private sector companies. In addressing organisational culture within Universities, Whitchurch draws on the McNay model of emerging Corporation and Enterprise cultures alongside a long established culture of Collegium and Bureaucracy (Whitchurch 2004). This model builds on Weick's concept of loosely coupled systems that describe the classic collegial academy with significant professional autonomy (Weick 1976).

McNay describes four types of culture, academic collegial culture (highlighting freedom), a public administration tradition described as a bureaucracy (based on regulation), corporate culture (reliant on authority) and entrepreneurial culture (based on client service). All four cultures exist in most Universities, but one may predominate over the others, depending on current pressures in

the environment, leadership and historical tradition (McNay 1995). This model is illustrated below.

Diagram 2 Models of Universities as Organisations

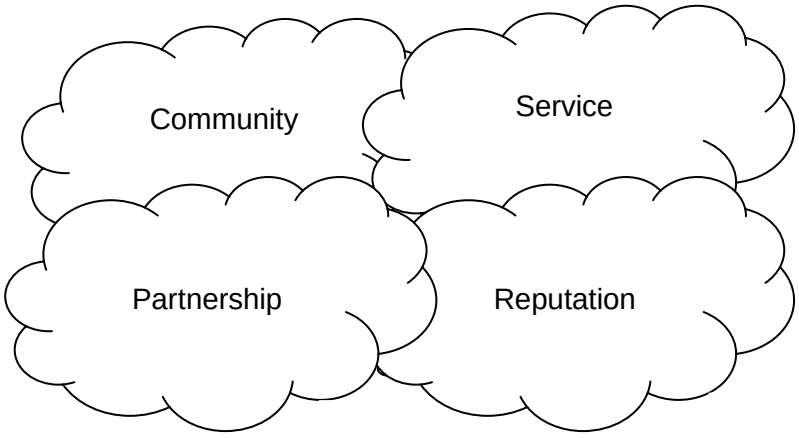


Whitchurch 2004, p 286, from McNay 1995

Mc Nay argues that in quadrants A and B power is distributed both informally and formally within the institution, in quadrants C and D it is concentrated at the centre. He implies a clockwise movement through the quadrants, from A to D, as a normal cycle for UK Universities. Whitchurch argues that the model does not take account of the many interdependencies of individual decisions and activities, and the four segments have now become conceptually broader and less rigidly bounded. As zones come together and then separate according to need, implying that the firm delineation in McNay's model is less reflective of what actually happens when managers operate effectively across boundaries and so culture becomes blurred (Whitchurch 2004). To support this argument, the McNay model is reworked to demonstrate Community (Collegium), Service (Bureaucracy), Partnership (Enterprise) and Reputation (Corporation).

A key factor for confidence in operational decisions is that the managers based in each quadrant make decisions within their quadrants while having knowledge of the likely outcomes in other quadrants. This understanding of the wider effects of decisions has significant implications for understanding lateral and multi-functional working by professionals populating the third space. It is likely to have a significant impact on decision making, potentially increasing the effectiveness of such managers within the organisation (Scott and Davis 2007). Taking the features of blurred and less rigid boundaries, Whitchurch proposes an updated approach to organisational culture.

Diagram 3 From 1995 to 2004 - Whitchurch revisits McNay



Whitchurch 2004, p288

Whereas Whitchurch argues that the collegium is being replaced by the community, Shattock offers an alternative view that the main argument for a collegial style of management is that it is the most effective driving force to achieve success in the core business (Shattock 2003). Staff working in the third space are constructing new forms of authority via their institutional knowledge and the relationships they create on an individual basis. Credibility within an institution will depend on individual profiles of professional managers, but it may be that while there is complementarity of

individual working relationships in third space domains, there is potential dissonance at organisational level created by an increase in managerialism. This might be due to a greater tendency for senior management to set measurable targets across all areas in a strategically led approach, which could potentially be counter intuitive to third space working. Managerialism is generally based on clear goals set in advance, and the use of performance measurement and accountability to achieve them (Hood 1995). It is therefore useful to examine the body of literature that examines the dynamics between managerialism and the emergence of third space.

The literature on new public management describes distinct features of efficiency, downsizing, decentralisation to create new organisational forms, service orientation, extension of audit, increased financial control, less self regulation for professionals, and a shift of power away from these groups to senior management (Hood 1995). There is an evolving articulation between administrative and academic communities, with stronger administration and increased strategic planning (Rhoades and Sporn 2002). These features place a major emphasis on culture change and the overt management of academic staff (Deem 2000, 2004, 2010). Cultural change is often accompanied by the creation of new organisational forms (Clark 1998), or the overall shaping of the organisation as a result of the environment (Mintzberg 1979b; Di Maggio and Powell 1983)

Of particular relevance to higher education management is the notion that cost based and client based managerialism is used to redefine public professionalism. New professional groups and methods are created and these activities serve to weaken the traditional professional groups (Noordegraaf 2007). The notion of government steering through the client base is supported by Deem, who highlights the use of the student body view to shape academic activity (Deem 2004), and an example of this in the UK is the National Student Survey (NSS) introduced in 2007. Although Noordegraaf bases much of the argument on the medical profession and health policy imposed by government via new managerialism, there are parallels with UK government education policy and the professionalisation of Universities to respond, with potential effects on the academic body. Government policy

developments during the early part of 2011 to strengthen the NSS both as an individual tool and as part of a wider public information set, indicate this process is accelerating.

The Lambert Report identified Universities as slow moving, bureaucratic and risk averse (Lambert 2003). Although the report did not dismiss the value of collegial decision making, the recommendations encouraged a movement away from decision making by committees and stressed the dynamism of rapid decision making of executive management. The overall position was that Universities run as communities of scholars were not fit for contemporary decision making. Recent government policy is described as potentially interventionist (Baldwin 2009), with attempts to shape the actions of autonomous bodies that use the client base to steer institutions (Deem and Johnson 2000). This ostensibly stresses students and academic standards, but with an underlying challenge to the autonomy of the higher education sector as a whole. This creates a view that the growth in academic administration reflects a decrease of government trust in the academic profession (Tight 2010). The Browne Review primarily reviewed methods of student funding, but also linked funding to national quality assessments that will further increase the accountability of Universities (Browne 2010).

Deem discusses the management of academic knowledge and “old” forms of public management such as research, teaching and staff morale, then compares this with the “new” elements of public management such as financial management, individual academic performance and enhanced public accountability. Although they have been blended together, the new forms still predominate (Deem 2004). In examining the extent to which new managerialism has permeated the management of UK Universities, Deem draws parallels with the National Health Service (NHS), noting that “the efficiency model” of doing more with less, has significantly permeated higher education (Deem 2006). The author connects aspects of new managerialism to decentralisation and delayering, although interestingly does not comment that downsizing is much in evidence. However, this report was published in 2000, and it seems likely that with the current financial and resource constraints placed on the UK higher education sector, downsizing is now

much more likely to occur. It is argued that higher education displays hybridised forms of new management compared to the NHS, because Universities have developed within existing structures rather than being subject to the major organisational reforms of the NHS.

The new managerialism literature may argue against the premise of third space working, for example, if government drivers for a competitive market environment result in a loss of organisational distinctiveness, where increased market influence breeds conformity as individual institutions all react the same way to funding system changes (Yielder and Codling 2004). Another potential impact on third space is where there are shared values and close alignment between professional services managers and academic staff, increased government managerialism could pose a challenge to this collaborative way of working. If managers are perceived as direct instruments of government policy, there may be adverse implications for third space working and shared understanding between academic and professional service communities. Corporate performance indicators introduce tensions, with also a potentially negative tension on hybrid working. National reforms have transferred decision making power away from academic staff to external stakeholders (Larsen 2009), the state is using external instruments to govern organisational and academic behaviours within Universities (Ferlie, Musselin et al. 2008), however there is evidence this is changing. The increased use of data in new managerialism links to the consumerist element of the individual student, as well as the student body as a whole (Deem and Johnson 2000). What differentiates higher education from other public services is the institutional autonomy that Universities retain, with more self direction and less central control. Higher education has been more difficult to influence than other public sector functions such as the National Health Service (Andresani and Ferlie 2006).

As institutions equip themselves to deal with challenging environments, their focus has moved to systems that deliver measurable outcomes against criteria set by both internal and external influences (Tight 2003). There is a shift toward the measurement and quantification of activity as a replacement of inherent trust in expert professionals. Yielder and Codling also highlight a

growth in managerialism that demonstrates the increasing influence of external stakeholders, with a strong emphasis on strategic planning at institutional level. There are simultaneous trends of increasing tension between collegial and managerial practices on the one hand, and individual freedom and personal accountability on the other (Yielder and Codling 2004). Lauwerys refers to a formalisation and codification of requirements, contrasting previous reliance on an individual professional approach, with a currently externally imposed complexity that results in control of systems and processes within institutions (Lauwerys 2002, 2008), as well as their internal governance (Salter 2002).

In summary, the new management literature offers both confirmation and challenge to the concept of third space working. On the one hand it is argued that emerging new professionals are proactively developing innovative forms of working within blurred boundaries and have shared values with the academic community. A feature of managerialism can be decentralisation of organisational structures, which may well favour hybrid professionals in terms of decision making outside formal structures as well as within them. Combined with the strong lateral relationships that take place in third space working, this may well change the way decisions are made. An alternative view highlights the likely tensions posed by increased government steering, and the increasing power of professional managers to deliver required institutional objectives, which are increasingly along a corporate rather than a collegial agenda as an inevitable response to government intervention.

2.4 Decision making and the exercise of judgement

Decision making involves the interpretation of roles against a context, and the exercise of judgement to seek a resolution to any number of complex situations. The conditions of the decision may be uncertain, of varying levels of risk, short or long term, unpredictable, poorly defined, and involve a number of people and priorities at all levels in the organisation. As no single model can deal with all possible options, the exercise of judgement on a case by case basis becomes a fundamental part of management.

Key aspects of decision making

Decision theory attempts give structure and rationale to different conditions under which decisions are made. A decision can be defined as a specific commitment to action and a decision process as a set of actions and dynamic factors that begins with the identification of a stimulus for action and ends with the specific commitment to action (Mintzberg, Raisinghani et al. 1976). Nutt defines a decision process as comprising of activities that begin with the identification of an issue and end with action (Nutt 2006). Historically, decision making has been examined from multiple perspectives although there is no universally agreed approach to classifying decision making styles. The research to date focuses heavily on the basic elements of information processing and units of information of decision making (Eberlin and Tatum 2008). The literature indicates a decision making process of several steps. A conventional model will typically consist of: Identifying the problem, framing the boundaries of the decision, evaluating alternative options, selecting solutions and finally implementing the decision (Rowley and Sherman 2003; McKenna and Martin-Smith 2005; Nutt 2006). The decision making process can be iterative, Mintzberg argues that a simple linear model is inadequate for most important organisational decisions, emphasising that time lags and cycling back are important elements in the process (Mintzberg 1980). Decisions may also possess varying levels of uncertainty and risk, however the manager must choose between alternative strategies, as persistent abstention from decision making causes organisational dysfunction (Archer 2003). Although some models suggest a number of stages in decision making, essentially the stages that are common throughout the literature possess the same three features: identification of a problem, the selection of alternative options, and the implementation of the decision. It is arguable that these three features are the most fundamental steps within decision making approaches, and so offer a framework for the purposes of this study.

How the decision is framed has a direct effect on outcomes (Mintzberg, Raisinghani et al. 1976; Nutt 1993). Managers have discretion on setting the boundaries of the decision (Archer 1964), which is particularly significant for decision making in uncertain situations (Bazerman 2002). The desire to

participate in decision making is a strong characteristic of the academic community (Shattock 2003; McNay 2005). Participation and communication openness are critical and should be multi-directional so that the appropriate information reaches decision makers, who are then able to inform those required to implement the decision (Rowley and Sherman 2003; Breen, Fetzer et al. 2005; Scott and Davis 2007). Decision quality is enhanced when multiple perspectives and alternatives are considered, and without minority viewpoints there is less likely to be the type of critical analysis necessary for effective decision making (Morrison and Milliken 2000).

With rapidly changing environments it is unlikely that those at the top of the organisation will have all the information they need to make sound decisions. Fineman extends the theme of participation in discussing decision making as a longitudinal and incremental process, highlighting that participants in a decision have often been participants in previous ones and expect to participate in future ones (Fineman, Sims et al. 2005). Participation encourages high quality decisions that are consistent with the goals of the organisation, with an ability to implement the decision because the group members understand and support the decision (Vroom 2003). Participation in decision making has certain dynamics, but with participation by groups, alignment of the participants is fundamental to achieve a shared objective (Senge 2006). Collaborative groups are distinctive because individuals represent a home group that must collaborate if they are to achieve their task. Members come together as equals and the question of who is managing what and where authority is located is critical to the success of the group (Sheard 2007). Participation is not always clearly defined, the involvement of different participants may be fluid, boundaries are uncertain and organisational preferences are ill defined and inconsistent (Cohen, March et al. 1972). As soon as aims become less clear, standard decision processes collapse, and are replaced by a “garbage can” into which participants dump problems and solutions, as and when they are generated. The notion of a garbage can model is based on three organisational features of problematic preferences, unclear technology and fluid participation. Successful implementation will require the participation of all individuals involved in the decision making process (Fineman, Sims et al. 2005). Such inclusion in the decision making

process is also linked to effective implementation by Vroom, who argues that effective decision making consists of two key elements of decision quality and support for its implementation (Vroom 2003). Participation creates commitment, which leads to effective implementation as key to decision success (Schwarber 2005).

Decision making involves the exercise of judgement and the use of influence, and these two activities are how managers add value to general organisational processes. The exercise of judgement is the process for deciding how the action should unfold and the use of influence is the process of shaping the behaviour of others (Chapman 2001). These actions become particularly significant when organisations and their environments are changing rapidly because expectations of managers will become more fluid and require their creative decision making. This is articulated through integrated links that cross organisational units, which supports the broad thrust of third space theory. Chapman extends Whitchurch's argument by postulating that the knowledge and information to make good decisions becomes valuable in providing an ability to respond to future uncertain demand above present day certainties. Continuing the theme of cross functional decision making, lateral relations can be used as a design strategy to facilitate complex decision making, so that managers are able to solve problems at their own level instead of passing up the organisational hierarchy. This would augment the proactive development of new professional roles with blurred boundaries (Meer-Kooistra 2008). Relevant factors for third space working are synergies produced by the interactions of decision making functions. These have potentially more value as components of the decision making process than as functions in their own right, and their synergistic effects mean that management decisions are more likely to be successful (Harrison 2000). Key themes suggested by the literature are decision making that includes participation by the right people to gather information and frame the boundaries of the decision, the exercise of judgement, the appropriate selection of alternatives (often in uncertain environments) and effective implementation of decisions. These three themes offer a framework within which to explore the literature on decision making specifically in higher education management.

Decision making in higher education management

Decision making in higher education has to be cognisant of the strong value placed by the academic community on close involvement in the decision making that affects them. Decision making processes that include academic staff become vital to decision making effectiveness. Shattock supports the fundamental strength of collegial decision making, arguing that the links between policy, management and implementation are extremely close in higher education, so the type of decision making that builds success and high performance is an outcome of decision making based on getting a number of small decisions right within an agreed strategic framework and appropriate timeframe, rather than high profile decisions that require major shifts in resources (Shattock 2003). Success is cumulative, rather than due to one major decision, and all decision making must have sensitivity to the academic performance. The role of the Dean is critical to effective decision making and they should be part of the central decision making process to act as an effective interface between the centre and the departments. Taylor agrees with much of Shattock's argument, but suggests that the collegial model of management may no longer be appropriate (Taylor 2006). Pinfield agrees with Shattock that substantial decision making influence can be exerted over time by many minor decisions. Drawing a contrast between orderly and structured decision making with anarchic decision making, it is argued that both perspectives are useful for considering organisational decision processes. A comparison of the two approaches considers how they might be complementary or inconsistent and concludes that they are partly complementary (Pinfield 1986). In terms of collegial decision making, the anarchic model is probably the closest descriptor, as it involves decision making that is less structured, with greater input of a range of ideas from "grass roots" levels.

New managerialism, with its clear corporate steer and quantification of objectives favours structured decision making. An evaluation of which approach might apply depends on whether there is agreement on the goals to be achieved. Cohen, March and Olsen describe Universities as "organised anarchies", drawing similar parallels to Pinfield in terms of anarchic decision

making and ambiguity of choice, so that an individual has only limited control of the situation in which they find themselves (Cohen, March et al. 1972). Clark places academic staff at the core of activity and decision making, in describing the "strengthened steering core" and the "academic heartlands" (Clark 1998, 2004). The strategic centre provides steerage, but the creative activity is generated by the departments. The notion of a central steering core is extended by Sheard, who maintains that at the centre of any organisation there is the core group that makes all the decisions (Sheard 2007). Rotation in and out of departments is essential to retaining links, credibility and organisational cohesiveness (Shattock 2003). This stance is supported by Rhoades and Sporn, but they also highlight trends away from decision making based in the collegial model of professors, towards professional managers (Rhoades and Sporn 2002). Historically, much of the value of academic administrators lay in their role as guardians of the institution's regulations. This began to change when institutional structures and management responsibilities were distributed outwards from the centre, resulting in a need for managers to produce rather than record information (Whitchurch 2007). This shift towards the interpretation of information is fundamental to the ability of professional services managers to shape institutional decision making.

Although decision making structures and roles within Universities are changing, senior managers attempt to mediate the impact of change on their institutions, recognising the importance of conditions that allow academic staff to work most creatively and constructively. However, structures of decision making are producing a change in relationships and new group identities and loyalties. Even though academic and professional services managers may have different perspectives, they share values and beliefs which constitute a community view. This is distinct from the values found in academic areas at faculty, school or department level, and has a bearing on decision making (Colville and Tomkins 1994; Deem and Johnson 2000). Governance and decision making should involve both the central administration and the faculties, taking account of the strong desire for academic autonomy (Rowley and Sherman 2003). Alongside this, there are the constraints created by the rotation of Heads of Department, who are not necessarily willing leaders or

equipped with the management skills to perform the role. Decision making has to be highly collegial otherwise the individual is less able to return to the faculty once his tenure is over. If Heads of Department operate under these constraints, this may mean that a full range of options cannot be considered. This distinguishes their decision making from that of professional services managers who largely occupy their roles on a permanent basis and may not have such constraints to address.

Two points underpin organisational trust in the fundamental soundness of its own decision making processes. Firstly, that management decision making and the organisation coexist in a mutually supportive and reciprocal relationship (Harrison 2000). Secondly, irrespective of decision outcomes, that the legitimacy and integrity of decision making structures within the institution is potentially the key element in creating and maintaining trust and acceptance for decisions taken (Larsen 2009).

2.5 Organisational management within higher education

Universities are complex organisations, and the UK sector does not have a typical organisational structure that predominates. Factors such as age, disciplinary mix, location and size will all have a bearing (Shattock 2003, 2006), as will the culture of the academic and professional services staff who work within them. In addition, all higher education institutions go through stages of evolution as part of a particular cycle (McNay 1995, Whitchurch 2004), and this will also have a bearing on organisational behaviour at any given time. For the purposes of this study, organisations are defined as a collective of participants who pursue multiple interests, but who also have a shared purpose to achieve an overall common goal.

Universities and their environment

A commonly held view is that higher education institutions have diverse organisational structures. Di Maggio and Powell argue persuasively against this, describing a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units facing the same set of environmental conditions. Organisational characteristics are modified to increase compatibility with

environmental characteristics. This is referred to as “institutional isomorphism” that results in homogeneity of structure across a related sector. The key concepts linking different organisations into a wider group are connectedness and structural equivalence, to link shared activity between the organisations and similarity of position in a network (Di Maggio and Powell 1983). Di Maggio and Powell argue that the bureaucracy structure is the most common organisational form, although this can be challenged through examining the literature put forward by Mintzberg. A similar theme of organisational shaping to match its surroundings describes organisational configuration as a logically consistent clustering of its elements, as it searches for harmony with its environment (Mintzberg 1980). Of five organisational configurations proposed by Mintzberg, the three most relevant to higher education are the Professional Bureaucracy**,** which is highly decentralised, democratic and non-regulatory, unresponsive to change, with poor co-ordination and control, and is typical of Universities and hospitals. The second is the Divisionalised Bureaucracy, which has limited decentralisation and highly segmented, quasi-autonomous substructures that have some ability to respond to change. This is typical of large organisations and those which explicitly attempt to respond to a diversified market. The third relevant configuration is the Adhocracy, which can take the form of the Operating Adhocracy or the Administrative Adhocracy. This configuration varies in relation to centralisation and decentralisation, is often innovative and able to respond rapidly to change in a complex environment. This is typical of young organisations or specialised teams within larger organisations (Mintzberg 1983).

Mintzberg’s theories should be seen in the context in which they emerged during the late seventies and early eighties, at a time when the environment for higher education was markedly different. Pressures for strategic change and managerial accountability have changed the wider environment, and the professional bureaucracy may no longer be able to respond as quickly or as effectively in such competitive circumstances. More relevant configurations may include the divisionalised form or the administrative adhocracy, possibly as hybrids with the professional bureaucracy, which challenges Di Maggio and Powell. These organisational forms would equip Universities to achieve

decentralisation in response to the market, while still having some control in the divisionalised form. Fineman builds on Mintzberg's theories to also offer an alternative view to Di Maggio and Powell, by arguing that organisations operating in an uncertain environment will adopt the adhocracy model as a fluid, task oriented structure that is better suited to cope with turbulence (Fineman, Sims et al. 2005).

Against this apparently structured approach of organisational configuration, is the concept of "loosely coupled systems" where coupled events are responsive, but each event preserves its own identity, along with its physical and logical separateness (Weick 1976). This results in a relative lack of organisational co-ordination and an absence of regulation, with different parts of an organisation coming together to meet changing demands within variable timescales. Two common coupling mechanisms are the authority of office and the technical core of the organisation. Deciding which elements are coupled and for what purpose shapes where the boundaries are drawn, and how they exert leverage on the system. This flexibility increases responsiveness to the environment, although these theories support the permeable boundary notion of the third space, there may be insufficient organisational linkage to use the information gleaned, so that any benefits from increased responsiveness are lost through a lack of co-ordination. This loss of organisational control is a significant counter argument put forward by Robertson, as it may not be possible to translate improvements in one area across to other areas (Robertson 1993). It is in applying local systems to the wider organisational system that Weick's argument can be challenged, as local areas can adapt but they do so in isolation from the whole organisation. Robertson also identifies a potential lack of control in Mintzberg's divisionalised form, arguing that this organisational configuration inherits the complete absence of adequate control systems, with "few adequate performance measures; and no standardization of outputs" (Robertson 1993, p.50). Hatum and Pettigrew evaluate organisational adaptation to the environment specifically in relation to competitiveness (Hatum and Pettigrew 2006). Of particular relevance is centralisation and formalisation of decision making. The authors argue that highly centralised decision making hinders innovation because it is concentrated in the hands of a few members of the

organisation. However, a counterargument suggests that although low levels of formalised decision making may augment creativity, the relaxation of control may disrupt implementation of new ideas.

It should be noted that pressures for change will apply differentially to Universities, and some will have more modest pressure to change than others. Resource constraints will have significant impact on the sector as a whole, particularly if driven by government legislation. The significant cuts to higher education funding announced by the government during 2011 will cause Universities to examine costs in all areas. Administration costs in the UK may be rising (Ramsden 2009; Hogan 2011), although care needs to be taken with how "administration" is defined, particularly whether it includes academic administration, or whether it also includes library resources, bursary costs to students, student services and other aspects of University infrastructure (Leslie and Rhoades 1995). Although core administrative costs are not rising as much as may be perceived (Hedrick, Wassell Jr et al. 2009; Hogan 2011), as some calculations include the significantly increased costs of student bursaries and core academic administration services, such expenditure will still have to be addressed.

The need to respond to rapidly changing environments is a theme explored by Chapman in identifying new forms of organisation, in which managers add value to organisational processes to build organisations rather than simply maintain and control them. Cross unit processes are applied by managers who demonstrate autonomy and initiative, with creativity and flexibility in decision making. This combination of changed structure and managerial decision making provides a flexibility which is otherwise not achievable. Organisations that operate in this way will become more outward looking, which is desirable in highly challenging environments (Chapman 2001). Teaching and research are core elements of University business, so where Universities place their decision making authority for academic governance is fundamental to understanding their organisational complexity and its impact on management.

Organisational structure and management in higher education

Becher and Kogan identify three levels of authority within higher education, the basic unit, which is the academic department, an authoritative collection of basic units forms the institution, which is itself subject to a central authority of a national system of higher education (Becher and Kogan 1992). The key purpose of academic organisational structures is to conduct academic business effectively, to deliver academic views and decisions upwards, and report discussion and decisions taken by central bodies downwards, and to facilitate debate on University issues generally (Shattock 2006). In discussing the determinants of academic organisation, as age, mix of disciplines, physical location and size, Shattock proposes that it is not possible to define an ideal academic organisational structure, but highlights three fundamental principles of academic organisation: The key role of the department, faculty relationships between the centre and the departments, and the role of the Deans. There is some agreement that no single organisational model applies, and that Universities reflect local circumstance, culture, history and discipline mix (Hogan 2005; Taylor 2006). An organisation is described as an "ideal seeking system" because it is neither fixed nor final, but subject to continuous change in the light of new information as it seeks an ideal structure (Ackoff 1977). Essentially, these authors support a contingency model appropriate for the particular set of circumstances that apply to each particular institution. This suggests a fundamentally iterative approach where systems are developed and then reshaped based on experience and understanding, so enabling adaptation to their environments.

The literature reflects a consistent view of the academic department as the core unit of the organisation (Becher and Kogan 1992; Tight 2003). Shattock develops this argument to reflect that faculties do not command the same collegiality and ideological coherence. They may also become a bureaucratic layer which can be an obstacle to effective links between the departments and the centre. Institutional size is often put forward as the argument for devolution to faculties, but the organisational impact of increasing student numbers can be managed by having larger departments within the existing framework (Shattock 2003). Kenward offers partial support to this view by

highlighting the links between academic structures and their alignment to institutional missions (Kenward 2008). A prime motivation for creating faculties has been to simplify structures from the perspective of the centre, with evidence of academic organisational change between 1993 and 2002 demonstrating shifts towards reduced numbers of larger units (Hogan 2005). As national governments have decentralised responsibilities to higher education institutions (Brennan and Shah 2000; Whitchurch 2006; Taylor 2007), there has been a trend to centralise decision making power within these institutions. Taylor argues that one of the main challenges Universities face is to balance the need for central strategic decision making with more devolved responsibilities throughout the organisation (Taylor 2007). Supporting this view, Damanpour argues that as organisations grow, decision making cannot be contained at the centre, but should be delegated down the levels of the hierarchy, as well as horizontally to those members who have specialised knowledge of the situation (Damanpour 1992).

Most organisations whether large or small, will tend to centralise decision making during times of turbulence or crisis, and the need to be both flexible and responsive has put traditional structures under significant pressure. Reflecting this, organisations have reacted to a perceived mid-level obstruction by widespread delayering of this level (Freeman and Cameron 1993), with downsizing as a routine management tool in the reorientation of organisational structure. Whittington and Pettigrew also argue that hierarchies of middle management staff and structure have impeded flows of information and rapid responsiveness (Whittington, Pettigrew et al. 1999). Larsen offers a combined perspective by arguing that the tendency to centralise decisions within the institution may actually trigger a need for strategic decentralisation, by creating units that are specifically equipped to deal rapidly with an increasingly competitive environment (Larsen 2009). Clark charts the trend for decentralisation via devolved budgetary and planning arrangements between 1998 and 2004, with the devolved organisational model that is particularly common in large multi-faculty institutions (Clark 2004). However, this raises problems of disjointedness within the institutional whole, and may create problems of co-ordination and strategic development. The growth of institutions can lead to a hierarchical loss of contact (McNay 2002), increasing

departmental detachment from the wider corporate body, leading to the alienation from the “community of scholars” tradition that defines the essential characteristic of a University (Lauwerys 2002).

Deem argues that new managerialism entails interrelated organisational and managerial changes, usually from the strategic centre of the organisation outwards, rather than filtering inwards from the departments. Organisations are defined in terms of how academic activities are grouped, organisational culture, and how members of the basic units relate to the organisation as a whole (Deem 2004). The location of where individuals sit in an organisation will shape their view of any given situation (Colville and Tomkins 1994), a premise supported by Archer who expresses this in terms of structure and agency, proposing that professional identities are shaped by the structures in which they find themselves (Archer 2003). Changes in University structure and its influence on administration are charted by Whitchurch, which range from the “academic administration” of the 1970s, through the “devolved management” of the 1980s and 1990s to the management of “increasingly open institutions” during the 2000s (Whitchurch 2004). These studies also suggest that the opportunity to exercise personal agency depends on where an individual is situated in the organisation. Professional staff at the centre regard themselves as professional managers, whereas those at the periphery consider themselves to be academic administrators (Whitchurch 2006). This argument is persuasive, although other factors that could also influence this view are the seniority of the role (offering a higher and broader level view) and involvement in institutional projects as a specific part of the role even if based in departments (offering a view across the institution). Henkel sees a trend of “centralised decentralisation” in terms of establishing a senior management team to support the Vice Chancellor, with more corporate strategies and structures needed to manage external policy developments (Henkel 2005). In particular, the effects of changing national funding and quality policies require institutions to set explicit corporate standards that are subjected to public scrutiny. Universities generally recognise that there should be a balance between the need for more institutional direction and the fostering of strong basic academic units (Henkel 1997)

The literature offers a picture of a rapidly changing sector, with increasing demands from government and a diversifying market within a context of reducing resource. Universities constantly adapt their organisational structures as they attempt to respond to an environment underpinned by a shift from elite to mass higher education. Decision making takes place in situations of uncertainty and flux, with potentially unclear outcomes. Managers are interpreting their roles more proactively, and their professional boundaries are shifting and becoming more blurred. These factors have created a context where professionalisation of higher education management is becoming increasingly necessary, and the implications of this process form a core aspect of the study.

2.6 Contribution of the study through four research questions

The literature on the third space is recent and still emerging, and the concept can be explored further to develop new ideas. In contrast, the literature on decision making is extensive and well established, but links between how decision making takes place in the third space have not yet been explored. Furthermore, there are gaps in understanding the effects on decision making of increasing professionalisation of higher education management, and how this interacts with changes in organisational structure in higher education institutions. This study explores decision making in relation to academic governance within the third space, in a way not previously studied. The effects on decision making of centralisation and decentralisation of higher education institutions are under researched, and the synergies of third space decision making and organisational structure are not fully understood. These lines of enquiry will address the central research question: **"How are the roles and decision making of professional services managers in higher education evolving in relation to organisational structure and academic governance?"** This core question will be expressed in terms of four research questions, which address its component parts in more detail and are aligned with the review questions used to examine the literature.

Research Question 1

How are the role and boundaries of professional services managers changing their relationships with academic staff?

Research Question 2

What are the effects of centralisation or decentralisation of organisational structure on how professional services managers carry out their role?

Research Question 3

How is decision making changing in terms of information gathering, selection between alternative options and implementation of decisions?

Research Question 4

What are the effects of centralised or devolved organisational structure on the decision making of professional services managers?

The research questions have pertinence to the literature, they are drawn from the core research question and will generate interview questions for collection of the data. This will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, which discusses the methodology and research design of the study.

3 Chapter Three - Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will set out the context of the study and its research questions, their bearing on the methodological approach taken, how this shaped the design of the study, and why particular research methods were selected. The chapter will then conclude with reflection and discussion on the methods used, including the journey taken and lessons learnt as the research progressed. The broad context of the study reflects an external environment that is becoming more complex and affecting the autonomy of both institutions and the academic communities within them. As institutions come under pressure to become more responsive at a number of levels a specifically skilled body of professional services staff is required to manage institutional engagement with the environment. The approach, design and method of the study are based on an evaluation of the theoretical frameworks drawn from a critical review of the literature, with philosophical assumptions about the nature of the social world framing the approach to the empirical work.

Four review questions were developed to examine the literature and develop a theoretical framework to generate more specific research questions. The review questions were securely embedded in the literature by the use of a logic framework to reflect a hierarchy of increasing detail. This mapped the review and the research questions back to the core research question, and across the bodies of literature through particular quadrants. In this way the grounding of the questions to the literature was explicit and robust, and the primary constructs can be specifically measured in the framework. This approach also demonstrates that the interview questions emerge from the four research questions, so confirming the methodological links between the interview protocol and the literature.

The definition of professionalisation of management is articulated in terms of role and decision making, and these ideas are summarised as a matrix.

Table 2 Review Questions mapped against the Theoretical Framework, with Research Questions drawn from the Literature

Core research question How are the roles and decision making of professional services managers in higher education evolving in relation to organisational structure and academic governance?

Review Questions	What Changes in the Boundaries of Professional Services Management are taking place?	What are the Effects of Organisational Structure on Management Activity?
How are the Roles of Professional Services Managers evolving?	***Research Question 1*** *How are the role and boundaries of professional services managers changing their relationships with academic staff?*	***Research Question 2*** *What are the effects of centralisation or decentralisation of organisational structure on how professional services managers carry out their role?*
What are the changes taking place in Decision Making by Professional Services Managers?	***Research Question 3*** *How is decision making changing in terms of information gathering, selection between alternative options and implementation of decisions?*	***Research Question 4*** *What are the effects of centralised or devolved organisational structure on the decision making of professional services managers?*

Embedding the research questions into the wider theoretical framework of the literature:

Professionalisation in Higher Education	Quadrant 1	Quadrant 3
Third Space Theory (Identity, New Managerialism)	Quadrant 1	Quadrant 3
Decision Making Theory	Quadrant 3	Quadrant 4
Organisational Theory (Structure, Management)	Quadrant 2	Quadrant 4

3.2 Research Approach

When considering the theoretical framework surrounding the empirical work, a key consideration is how reality will be defined within the context of the subject being investigated, and the design strategy most likely to yield useful information. A qualitative approach allowed the greatest opportunity to include the contextual aspects of the environment and its participants, and to explore emerging themes holistically. A critical realist position was adopted, as it recognises the importance of causation, accepting that there is a real world that exists independently of the individual and it is possible to learn more of this reality. However, this discovery is not always straightforward, and these issues are discussed in relation to this study.

The use of a qualitative methodology

The qualitative method has a number of strengths that create a framework to investigate the research questions. Broadly speaking, the approach has a stance of methodological individualism, describing processes rather than structures (Van Maanen 1979; Gergen and Gergen 2000), which enables a focus on the underlying reasons for events not just the events themselves. Qualitative research is not always easy to define, however the literature puts forward several features within a context that is commonly recognised. Studies are undertaken in a natural setting where the researcher is an instrument to gather data, performing inductive analysis that focuses on meaning making by the participants with outcomes that are based on interpretation (Miles and Huberman 1994; Cresswell 1997; Seale 1999; Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Gergen and Gergen 2000). Miles describes the process as a flow of information that is holistic, rich and chronological (Miles 1979). Furthermore, there is an established history and tradition of qualitative approaches within management research (Cassell, Symon et al. 2006). A weakness of the qualitative approach is that methods of analysis are not well formulated (Miles 1979), for quantitative date there are clear conventions the researcher can use. However, since this argument was put forward, the position is changing due to more robust methods for qualitative methodology being developed.

Qualitative researchers stress the role of values and social elements within reality and the close relationship between the researcher and what is studied to establish how experience is created and given meaning. Methods are contextual and pragmatic, and guided purposefully with a strong consideration of context and causation (Guba and Lincoln 1994). Reflection by the researcher is critical to the qualitative approach, enabling adaptation of the method as insight is gained. It was important not to compromise this methodological flexibility by avoiding early decisions on the relationships between variables. This prevented the undue predetermination of outcomes as adapting to emerging findings is a key strength of the qualitative approach (Eisenhardt 1989; Punch 2005). The interviews were able to capture the reflections and decision making of professional managers in their usual settings, which was significant in exploring different perspectives. The qualitative method accommodates a large number of variables, and therefore can fully reflect the complexity of higher education institutions. The role of values will be significant in terms of the respondents and the information they offer, but are also relevant to the researcher's view of the world, and any influence of values on the methodological decisions made during the course of the study. If the factors shaping decisions are made explicit this becomes a key strength of the method due to clarity about the choices made (Meyer 2001). To achieve this care has been taken to describe the actual steps taken at each stage of the research.

Potential weaknesses of the qualitative method might be poor reliability of findings resulting in weak claims that cannot be justified. This can result in a lack of credible generalisations, particularly in complex situations. Conversely, because of the reliance on interpretation, the claims might be excessively bold if they are not based on clear criteria, and so lack credibility for different reasons. The collection and analysis of qualitative data is frequently time consuming, which can be a weakness if resources are constrained. However, overall the qualitative method was appropriate for these particular research questions to capture the complexity of the cases. By understanding them well, it is possible to generalise based on analytical deduction and detailed insight into a few representative cases, rather than generalisation based on the numerical representation of a large sample size.

The theory of Critical Realism

There is much debate about what constitutes knowledge, and an evaluation of both confirmatory and conflicting standpoints influences the theoretical position adopted. Sayer highlights some misconceptions about knowledge, where this is gained purely through contemplation or observation of the world and what is known can be reduced to what is stated explicitly, without other contributory elements. It is argued that there are flaws in the argument that knowledge is a product quite separate from any social activity or consideration of how it was produced, and that science is presumed to be the primary form of knowledge, that displaces other types (Sayer 1992). I considered these concepts specifically in terms of their contribution towards the overall aim of the research questions. This process of adopting a position relies on setting aside theories as well as accepting them, and this process of elimination itself was a useful exercise in gaining understanding.

Four concepts are described by Guba and Lincoln to distinguish between ontological, epistemological, axiological and methodological paradigms of inquiry (Guba and Lincoln 1994), where the perception of what constitutes reality is a central question. Ontological assumptions shaped understanding of what was deemed to be real and valid for the subject of the research. I initially considered a constructivist standpoint, but on reflection set this aside in favour of a critical realist position. A constructivist view sees reality as a creation of its actors and their understanding of their situation, and how these influences interact with each other. Interpretation becomes key to these participants, and constructivism permits multiple interpretations of the same reality. In contrast, a realist view proposes that there is a real world that exists independently of its inhabitants, it is not simply a set of linguistic constructs. Realists argue that it is possible to gain some knowledge of this world, but that gaining such insight is always fraught with difficulty, because reality is made up of complex events that may have a number of causative factors, and consist of dynamics that are not always evident. The initial constructivist perspective recognised the importance of interpretation, and there is much in the literature that supports this aspect as a particular strength of constructivistism (Kerdeman 1998; Gergen and Gergen 2000; Schwandt

2000), and the way this leads to the development of deep understanding or "verstehen" and meaning making (Lincoln and Guba 2000; Seale 2000). It is accepted that an interpretive stance can create shared knowledge which offers opportunities to understand why events happen as they do. However, a key limitation of constructivism is the apparent lack of acknowledgement that the world is not a construct of the mind, but actually has an independent existence.

An acceptance that a real world exists was a fundamental driver for the decision to adopt the realist position, as key aspects of this perspective were directly relevant to my research questions. It is possible to identify key eight features of critical realism (Sayer 1992), of particular significance are the existence of a world that is independent of our knowledge of it, and what understanding we possess is fallible and theory laden. This knowledge is not accumulated in a uniform way and can be checked empirically. Realism accepts the existence of both real and thought objects, where real objects are facts that exist whether or not an individual knows about them. Thought objects are the descriptors used to portray real objects by descriptions that use language based on concepts, so in this way the theoretical links with the "real". The realist position was appropriate for this study as any knowledge of the world, whilst imbibed with personal values and individuality, is still subject to causative factors from an environment that is independent of its inhabitants. This is particularly pertinent to the context of higher education, where individual academic and professional services staff are embedded within rapidly changing situations that directly affect them, and institutions are themselves buffeted by a turbulent environment. Furthermore, these dynamics are all taking place in a context of constraints imposed by reduced resources, where manoeuvrability of decision making is significantly limited. Such pressures are not constructs of the mind, they are factual aspects of reality that affect both institutions and individuals, and so the realist perspective enables the holistic recognition of the impact of these dynamics.

It is useful to consider two particular aspects of critical realism related to the research questions and the use of case studies. Firstly, causation is a fundamental tenet of critical realism and causal language is therefore used to

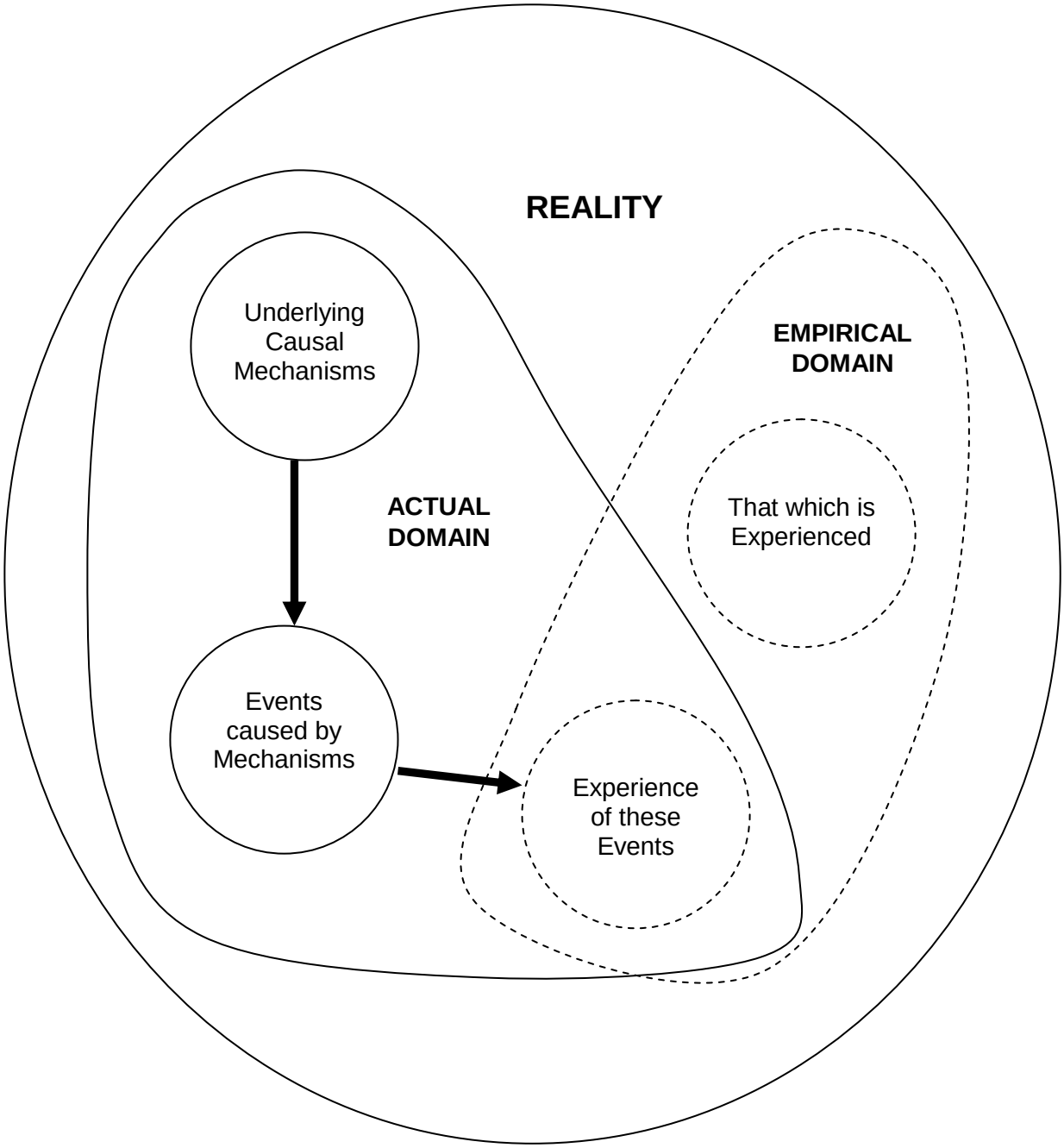
describe the world. The implications of this are that research questions are likely to reveal more if they build on the causative elements in the case, so that these interactions are made explicit. Observable events are caused by unobservable events, and to understand the social world there needs to be insight into the structures that generate such unobservable events. This distinction becomes important in the experimental context because it permits the researcher to distinguish between the event and what causes it. The review questions discuss changes and effects, both of which involve causation, so this makes critical realism highly relevant. The research questions discuss evolving role boundaries, changes in decision making and effects of organisational structure, all of which will explore what is happening in terms of actualities (the "what" and "how"). From this the "why" that underpins the overt questions and reveals the causes of events, can be explored. So the critical realist position weaves causation both into the review and the research questions, which is a strength for the purposes of this study. The second aspect considers case studies, a critical realist case approach is well suited to clearly bounded and complex research subjects such as organisations and the dynamic relationships within them. A realist perspective "justifies the study of any situation, with any number of research units involved, but only if the process involves thoughtful in depth research with the objective of understanding why things are the way they are" (Easton 2010). This links with Sayer in a discussion of two types of research method, extensive and intensive, with the latter focusing on individual agents in context within a qualitative method (Sayer 1992), which also supports the synergy between critical realism and case studies. Throughout the study I was conscious that events might have more than one cause, so the detail offered by specific cases enabled these synergies to be evaluated fully. Not only did this offer holistic insight into the causative factors, but it also clarified the differential effect of these factors on the situation. A key aspect is the recognition is that some causative factors will have more impact than others, and these differences need to be understood.

Structure and Agency concerns the relationship between the individual and society (Sayer 1992; Miles 2001; Archer 2003), and critical realists argue that the dynamic of structure and agency is of central importance in the social

sciences (Cruickshank 2010). Sayer describes structure as a context containing social structures within which individuals merely sit, and agency as conscious activity by individuals and groups within social settings (Sayer 1992). There is a further concept of internal and necessary relations, which proposes that individuals are intrinsically linked and that the existence of one necessarily presupposes the other. This argument is supported by Kemp, who refers to these relationships as fundamental building blocks of society (Kemp 2005). The strengths of a realistic perspective are evaluated by Miles through his discussion of social aspects expressed by contexts that include consumerism, risk and globalisation (Miles 2001), which are all contemporary aspects of the world. Critical realism is described as a stratified open system (Sayer 1992; Cruickshank 2010). It is stratified because causal mechanisms, which are unobservable in themselves, exist beneath changing empirical events. It is open because the system is open to change based on observable events (Cruickshank 2010). This leads onto another aspect of critical realism, which is the distinction drawn between the intransitive (reality) domain, and the transitive domain (relating to theories of reality). The transitive domain is so called because theories of reality are subject to change, they are taken to be inherently fallible, and so are revised in the light of new knowledge.

One of the most persuasive arguments describing critical realism is put forward by Bhaskar, in which a distinction is drawn between the domains of the real, the actual and the empirical (Bhaskar 1997). The domain of the actual consists of events caused by underlying causal mechanisms and the experiences of these, the domain of the empirical is that which is experienced. The domain of the real includes these two domains plus the domain of the underlying causal mechanisms themselves. These concepts taken together constitute the real world as expressed by critical realists. This is represented diagrammatically overleaf.

Diagram 4 How Critical Realism represents Reality



Based on Bhaksar 1997 [1975], and Cruickshank 2010

3.3 Research Design

The central principle guiding the research design was underpinned by the four research questions and the focus on generating appropriate data to answer them. The decisions I took when selecting case studies and data collection methods were driven by a combination of factors such as the wider representativeness of the institutions and the knowledge base of the roles within them, but also by more pragmatic elements such as access to busy managers. The design outcome has resulted from a combination of academic requirements and real world contingencies, and the robustness of the design will be proved or disproved by how well it achieves its research aim. However this is also alongside an awareness of any methodological impact that practical constraints may have had in shaping the design decisions taken.

Outline of the research design

Thirty semi-structured interviews were conducted across six higher education institutions, which included a combination of three pre 1992 institutions and three post 1992 institutions. In the UK, pre 1992 Universities are those that have generally been established by Royal Charter, whereas post 1992 Universities have been granted University status through the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. The sample also included one member of the Russell Group and two members of the 1994 Group of Universities. This provided a credible population from which data could be drawn to provide insight into the research questions. In each institution, similar roles were interviewed: Academic Registrar, Director/Head of Quality, Director/Head of Planning, Faculty/Department Administrator, and an academic Head of Department. The institutions were selected on the basis of being similar enough to bear some relation to each other in terms of the analysis, but different enough so that a broad range of findings could be captured. This purposive sampling was also contingent on access, and each of these institutions had an individual via whom I could contact potential respondents. Once the initial introduction was made by my institutional link, I then conducted all communications with the respondents to establish a good rapport from the outset.

A key tenet of a sound research design was to be able to gain data from five similar roles across six different institutions, to aid both understanding of the case itself and any comparative analysis between the cases. Also, gaining an interview from every potential respondent strengthened the data. These roles had been specifically selected because of their knowledge and expertise, and ability to give authoritative and accurate information about their institution and the wider higher education sector. However they were all in demanding roles with time pressures, and would not want this time wasted! Respondent participation was therefore an area of great practical importance as the study unfolded over several months of fieldwork. Had any of these roles refused an interview, or withdrawn from the study at short notice, it would have been a significant limitation on the data about that particular institutional case. A response rate of 100% indicates that the positive early relationship between all thirty respondents and myself was successful, and this rapport established a constructive platform for the quality and engagement of subsequent interviews.

In summary, the design framework was based on purposive sampling using six case studies each containing five similarly linked data collection points within the cases, to identify common themes and patterns that may have generalisable implications. Key strengths of case studies are that they examine a subject holistically and in its natural context, which is particularly important given the nature of this study. Carefully selected case studies as individual units of understanding might therefore demonstrate features containing generalisable implications. The distinguishing characteristics of case studies in general and their appropriateness for the particular research questions in this study are now evaluated.

Design factors in the use of case studies

Case studies are described as an attempt to examine a particular case within a bounded system (Eisenhardt 1989; Stake 2000), or a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context (Miles and Huberman 1994). The importance of the holistic and naturalistic integrity of the subject are acknowledged by Punch, who also emphasises the significance of boundary

and context as fundamental to interpretation (Punch 2005). The factors that are included or excluded from the context, and where the boundaries are placed, become critical to case study outcomes. Although often linked with qualitative research, case studies can be based on qualitative or quantitative data (Fontana and Frey 2000; Silverman 2005), and do not imply the use of a particular data collection method. Whether a case study is a wider methodological approach or a way of identifying the focus of study can be contentious, and the literature reflects this. Case studies can be regarded as research strategies (Eisenhardt 1989), to study contemporary phenomena in their real life contexts. This can be particularly useful when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident (Yin and Heald 1975; Cresswell 1997). Meyer agrees that case studies can be research strategies, highlighting the most important criteria that set the boundaries for a case study as importance or criticality, relevance and representativeness (Meyer 2001). In evaluating the case study not as a methodological choice, but as a decision on what is to be studied using a range of methods, Stake offers a useful construct that distinguishes three main types of case study as intrinsic, instrumental and collective case studies (Stake 2000). An intrinsic case study creates understanding of a case as a unique example that is studied in its own right. The instrumental case study is where a case is examined to offer insight into a specific issue from which generalisations may be drawn. Finally, multiple instrumental cases may be studied together as a comparative case study. It is also worth noting that case studies may accompany other methods as part of a wider study (Cresswell 1997), and within a mixed quantitative/qualitative approach.

The literature describes varying definitions and purposes of case studies, but the significance of boundary, studying the subject in its natural setting and context, holism and gaining deep understanding of complexity are recurrent features. Using Stake's definitions, each of the six higher education institutions is an instrumental case study, as the aim is to understand newly emerging behaviours and patterns within each higher education institution, to draw lessons for the wider higher education sector. The boundaries of each institution within its higher education context were straightforward to establish, and the use of case studies allowed their interaction to be explored

holistically. The internal dynamics of each organisation were far less clear, but the case study approach captured this complexity without disrupting the subjects of investigation.

Case studies are particularly useful in answering “how” and “why” questions about contemporary events (Meyer 2001), and these aspects featured prominently in the interviews. For example, I used “how” questions when asking respondents what actions they took to achieve effective outcomes, the methods they used to influence, or how the organisation approached a particular issue. I asked “why” questions to probe the reasons underpinning particular actions, gaining respondent views, or exploring the underlying contextual factors behind events. In this way, the data were both rich in content and well directed to match the central research subject. A consistent approach for all respondents within a single case developed a detailed and holistic understanding (both explicit and implicit), of each particular case, but also a measure of consistency between cases. The case study approach also permitted a flexible emphasis on the “how” and “why” questions, so they can be explored differentially. For example, an action of how something was done may be quite straightforward (“how”), yet the reasons underpinning this action might be far more complex (“why”), and would need more time and attention to explore them fully. This would vary from case to case, and I was able to make this judgement as the interviews unfolded, particularly where the respondents had varying awareness of the implications of emergent behaviour within their own institution.

In terms of generalisation, cross case comparisons between the six institutions offer opportunities to examine differences and similarities, which according to Eisenhardt improve the likelihood of accurate and reliable theory, and a greater probability of capturing novel findings (Eisenhardt 1989). This is challenged by Yin, who argues for the epistemology of the particular by proposing that the way we learn is by comparison, for example how a particular single case is similar to or different from other cases (Yin 1981). In contrast, Stake argues this approach as competing with generalisation, because the amount learnt is reduced because the search for particularity

competes with the search for generalisability, and what should be said about a single case differs from what should be said about all cases (Stake 1994).

Distinguishing what is atypical and resting just within a particular case, was an important aspect of the study throughout all stages. Although the pre and post 1992 institutions were grouped for the data collection, they were not studied as pre / post 1992 collective cases, because this was not relevant to the research questions. Any cross case comparisons were drawn across the six institutions as a single sample, so the approach was aligned most closely to that described by Stake. The use of field notes was critical in identifying new behaviours or themes as they emerged, both in the notes taken during the interviews, and as tool for recording impressions and ideas for further investigation. After each set of interviews, I completed a field note summary for each institution, from which it became clear that the trends were consistent in each case study, and it was methodologically sound to approach the sample in this way.

Had there been any significant institutional differences, the case study approach might have needed to change, and I took this into account as the study progressed. For example, had one institution clearly demonstrated conflicting trends from the rest, then Yin's approach of generalising by comparing this single cases against the rest of the sample might have been more appropriate (Yin 1981). Another consideration is the specific areas where variant trends arise, as some conflicts will have a greater impact on the research questions. In particular, as the focus is on four broad areas of professionalisation, third space, decision making and organisational centralisation or decentralisation, if the case study conflict occurred in these key areas of investigation it would have a more significant impact than if the conflicting information occurred in areas of less relevance to the research questions. The greater the relevance to the research question of conflicting information, the more likely a change in method would have become necessary. However, this did not prove to be the case, as no matter what size, history or discipline mix, the trends across all six case studies were the same indicating that the population sample was appropriate for the research questions. A key difference between case studies and other qualitative

designs such as grounded theory or ethnography, is that case studies are guided by concepts and theories that may be understood from the literature, whereas grounded theory or ethnography are based on the assumption that theoretical perspectives will emerge directly from the data (Meyer 2001). The theoretical framework used to guide the design of the case studies was a fundamental strength, underpinning the concepts based on the literature review. Once established, this framework provided iterative reference points that were used throughout the study to maintain the logical consistency of the argument as hypotheses were developed. This was a key advantage that would not have been possible with a design based on grounded theory or ethnography.

Having considered the strengths of case studies as a means of seeking answers to the research questions, their limitations should be evaluated. A common criticism of case studies is their limited generalisability, because the strength of links to a particular context is also a weakness in terms of applicability to wider situations. Also, they are often very detailed and intensive, so there are likely to be few in number, and using few data sources, whereas a survey method could address large numbers of respondents. However, for this study conducting a survey was inappropriate because it would not capture the complexity or richness of each situation and its participants, particularly in answering the “why” question, whereas case studies are strong in this area. Furthermore, it can be argued that six cases studies (with thirty respondents), offers a credible evidence base to support the claims made, so the overall design meets its intended purpose.

3.4 Research Method

Having established the number and nature of the cases to ensure a coherent sample, the collection of the data from the respondents needed to be robust. This was achieved in several ways, by interviewing appropriate roles possessing authoritative knowledge, ensuring these roles were based in both central and academic departments, using similar roles in each institution, and by adopting a measured interview technique as the researcher, to ensure the interview itself was not compromised. Following this, the data were analysed

in iterative and methodical phases to extract meaning and to draw sensible and warranted inferences that could provide a basis for new understanding. The research method is discussed in three parts: data collection and the use of interviews, data analysis and whether the method has resulted in findings that are valid, reliable, and generalisable.

Data collection and the use of interviews

Thirty interviews were conducted in two phases over five months, and it was important to secure solid commitment from the interviewees from the outset. The research design was strong, but relied on every role and perspective being represented. The initial contact with each respondent came from a colleague within their own institution, supported by information on what would be involved in terms of content and time. This approach secured an excellent rate of initial consent. An introductory letter was sent to each respondent describing the aims and purposes of the research, four to six weeks ahead of the appointment. This began a direct relationship with all participants prior to meeting them, and the dialogue was continued throughout the pre-interview phase. One week before the interview was due to take place, respondents were contacted again to confirm the interview arrangements, and to send them a second letter of information about the study. This letter suggested that respondents think of examples of particular decisions that would exemplify their answers within a context, to help them prepare constructively for the interview.

These steps helped to establish the 100% response rate, and a sense of trust with all thirty interviewees well before the interview itself, it also encouraged a "preunderstanding" (Meyer 2001; Boeije 2010), which was a constructive beginning. Interviews are interactional encounters and the nature of the social dynamics in the interview can shape the nature of the knowledge generated (Fontana and Frey 2000). The pre-interview contact helped the respondents to prepare, to increase their engagement with both the study and myself, and to proactively reflect on the questions they were being asked. Fontana and Frey describe a continuum model, with structured interviews at one end, through /semi structured interviews, to unstructured interviews at the

other end of the continuum (Fontana and Frey 2000). For the purposes of this study, structured interviews were rejected because they could have minimised the opportunity for variability and development of discussion. Unstructured interviews were rejected because they would be too open ended, which would not be helpful in answering the research questions, or in fully engaging with the theoretical framework. A semi structured interview approach was used, so that the same questions were asked of all participants, but with some flexibility to allow interviewees the opportunity to develop lines of enquiry that might be particularly relevant to exploring emergent themes. Probing and follow up questions were also semi structured to create an appropriate framework of relevant flexibility. This worked well, and the correct balance appeared to be struck throughout all the interviews, which lasted approximately one and a quarter hours on average, and allowed a deep and thorough exploration of the topic. The interview questions were divided into sections on changes in roles and boundaries, organisational structure, decision making processes and decision making authority with some concluding context questions described in the introduction to this chapter. This question structure had a consistent match to the logic matrix described in Table 2 (Chapter 3.1).

As a check of validity and appropriateness, at the end of the interview all respondents were asked if they felt the interview questions had worked well. All replied that they had, and that the questions were relevant to the subject under discussion. The questions were structured so that interviews naturally moved from one topic into the next, respondents were asked whether the order of the questions seemed appropriate, and they commented that the interviews "flowed" smoothly. The interviews therefore seemed to fit well to the interviewees' frame of reference (Boeije 2010). In addition, many respondents commented that they enjoyed the experience, and found it had made them reflect on their role in a constructive way. The depth and breadth of interviewing can collect important data on the "how" and "why" questions and I was mindful of making sure that I kept the links between these aspects and the research questions for each particular institution. This emerged as an extremely valuable aspect of the data collection. For example the "how" might be the same in more than one institution (for example organisational

restructure), but the “why” might differ in each case (for example resources, or staff changes, or changes of strategic direction). These distinctions are highly significant within the context of the research questions, and proactive and sensitive interviewing allowed these themes to emerge fully in a way that would be less likely with other data collection methods.

Constantly asking what is being learnt, for example how each case might differ from the last, allowed me to take advantage of flexible data collection in order to pursue particularly helpful lines of enquiry. Data collection instruments can be altered during a study because researchers are trying to understand each case individually and in as much depth as possible. This is referred to as “controlled opportunism” (Eisenhardt 1989), and reflects the experience during the study, where I would follow up unexpected but potentially rewarding themes to understand how they might develop. Field notes were maintained throughout the study, including notes of each interview, which enabled tracking of how themes were developing and potential links to other ideas. However, it was important to strike a suitable balance between varying the questions to explore themes and maintaining the cohesion and integrity of the question framework. The subsequent data analysis confirmed that this had been successful, as the data obtained were varied and comprehensive, with some fascinating insights into the subject, that had not been foreseen. This was highly rewarding as an individual researcher, and a reassuring indication that the method was generally sound.

As outlined earlier, interviewing was an appropriate method of data collection for the particular research questions. Weaknesses of this method however could potentially be in relation to the match of the interview to the topic of investigation, or the sequence or wording of questions. Steps were taken to counter this weakness, as every respondent was asked if they felt that the interview questions had seemed appropriate given the nature of the subject, and they all confirmed this. Respondents can also affect the data by answering in ways designed to please the interviewer, or to prevent the interviewer learning something from the information given. Answers may be embellished or key information may be omitted. I was mindful of this, but the

guarantees of confidentiality and the excellent rapport minimised these potential disadvantages.

Conscious or unconscious respondent deviation is a particular weakness where greater flexibility of response is permitted, but the semi-structured approach was effective in this respect, and I was aware of my role as the interviewer in preventing respondents from straying off the subject. However, it is also true that the greatest potential weaknesses in interviewing lie with the interviewer (Fontana and Frey 2000), who might impede proper communication of the questions by their questioning techniques or personal characteristics. I took care to elicit uncompromised responses, with particular consideration given to the similarity of my own professional background with some of the respondents, and the danger of overreliance on their answers, or bias in their favour and away from other respondents. Using field notes consistently was important in maintaining the integrity of the data collection. In particular, when ideas occurred as I was recording themes for potential further enquiry, I would ask whether the choice of a particular line of investigation emanated from the respondents' answers, or my own views and biases. This reflection was vital in ensuring themes were not pursued based on my personal values, and a discipline of recording field notes and asking self challenging questions was helpful. As a matter of courtesy, once the interviews were completed in each institution, every respondent was sent a personal letter to thank them for their time and support for the study.

Data collection can sometimes overlap with data analysis (Eisenhardt 1989), if approached proactively, data collection can provide a useful platform for subsequent analysis. The fifteen pre 1992 interviews were conducted first, which permitted some initial data analysis before undertaking the second fifteen interviews in post 1992 institutions. It was helpful completing the second phase of interviews having already identified key themes from the first phase, this meant that the second phase of data collection was informed by the analysis of the first stage, to maximise the opportunities for identifying emerging findings. Data analysis identifies the links between the fieldwork and understanding, and the role of the researcher is to clarify what the data contain, and then understand what the data are revealing in terms of patterns

and behaviours. I found this to be a highly iterative process. Bringing these together requires proactive interpretation and an open mind to avoid discounting novel discoveries. These activities take place within a wider process of coding, the stages of which will now be discussed.

Analysis of the data

Relevance to the research questions is fundamental to shaping the overall approach for data analysis. Interpretive analysis can be oriented towards themes and categories present in the data, or oriented towards cases such as organisations, situations or participants. This study has focused on emergent themes as being most likely to generate new and generalisable knowledge to answer the particular research questions. Data analysis is based on segmenting the data into parts, and then reassembling the data into a coherent whole (Miles and Huberman 1994; Silverman 2005; Boeije 2010). Reassembling the data identifies patterns and relationships, and by explaining why these may exist generates new knowledge or theory. Throughout the analysis, continuous cross reference to the theoretical framework proved to be a useful tool to maintain focus and relevance to the research questions, and to avoid digression away from the central investigation. Coding of the data is a way of establishing meaning in a systematic way, it is important that coding is set at the right level, so as not to destroy meaning (Miles 1979; Punch 2005). The analysis began with *open coding*, where the field was generally explored to establish the broad ideas, and organise the data. This was then developed further by *axial coding*, in which the properties of the categories were examined more fully to determine which elements of the research were the dominant ones, and which were the less important ones. This enabled an initial exploration of potential concepts, as well as a secondary purpose of reducing and reorganising the data set. The key themes that emerged at this stage involved interpretation of roles, issues around decision making, formal and informal influence, organisational centralisation and devolution, and a sense of shared ownership of higher education between the academic and professional services communities.

These two stages led to a final stage of *selective coding* where the primary themes of fundamental significance to the core research question were

identified, such as shifts in decision making authority, organisational (de)centralisation, professionalisation of both academic and professional services staff. New concepts successfully emerged from this process, which enabled the data to be reassembled in order to answer the research question.

It is worth noting that a weakness of coding is that because it is based on a given set of categories it can establish "a powerful conceptual grid" from which it can be difficult to escape (Silverman 2000). This could potentially reduce opportunities for innovative thought. Iterative comparison between raw data and its analysis mitigated against this, and detailed analysis of each institution allowed the unique patterns of each case study to emerge before pushing to generalise patterns across cases. There was a need to avoid drawing premature conclusions based on limited data, or to avoid disconfirming evidence that questioned the premise. Actively examining contradictory evidence can throw new light on the subject, and successfully challenging conflicting evidence confirms the findings and adds robustness to the overall study. Six case studies were chosen as a sound number to be able to generate sufficient data to learn something meaningful, but yet be able to explore them thoroughly and in enough detail as a single researcher. Eisenhardt argues that the analysis of fewer than four cases has insufficient complexity to generate theory, but with greater than ten cases creates too much data to manage meaningfully (Eisenhardt 1989). It can be argued that a small numbers of cases does not support a case for generalisability, however the focus on fewer cases that are carefully selected using clear criteria provides depth, and a richer, stronger study of each case. The institutions were selected to be representative of the UK higher education sector, with different historical backgrounds, varying sizes, and a mix of research intensive and more teaching institutions. Given the nature of the research questions and the use of case studies it has been particularly important to successfully link the study to the literature, because the findings will rest on a few cases. The development of a sound theoretical framework became particularly important to achieve this, and the successful use of the matrix to explicitly map back to the literature supports the grounds to support generalising from the six case studies.

Once the five interviews in each institution were coded, these were brought together in a summary for each organisation, resulting in a coded data set for each institutional case study. This had the benefit of developing thorough knowledge of each case that was explicitly informed by the data, before attempting any cross case comparison to determine whether themes and behaviours applied across all cases. This also enabled the practical management of large amounts of data, to support internal validity and reliability. Furthermore, case summaries enabled a secure grasp of the data at the basic unit level, before attempting to build on it. One of the primary reasons for cross case analysis is to enhance generalisability and deepen understanding and explanation (Miles and Huberman 1994). Case comparisons identify features within a case as units of analysis, and then potentially create a data set of standardised codes based on each unit of analysis (McClintock, Brannon et al. 1979; Miles and Huberman 1994). The primary codes used were: Role, Professionalisation, Decision Making, Organisation, Influence and Shared Ownership of Higher Education. These were evaluated both within and between institutions. Within the broad categories, I developed sub codes as I became more familiar with the data, for example: Role: Identity, Professionalisation: Academic and Administrator Perceptions, Organisation: Decentralisation, Decision Making: Shifts in Authority and Influence. This in itself was an illuminating exercise. For example, I began with a primary category of "Communication", but I discovered, even when using sub categories, that this was far too generic and actually did not add much understanding to the analysis as a distinctly separate code. Coding for communication became far more useful in generating insight when it was integrated within one of the other codes as a sub code. This gave it specific relevance to that primary code so it became more precise and meaningful (for example Role: Communication, Decision Making: Communication). In this way, I slowly became more familiar with the data and was able to disaggregate it effectively.

While the analysis of thirty interviews was very time consuming, the attention to detail allowed every opportunity for the generation of new insight and understanding. For example, the *higher education professional services framework* is an original concept, which emerged from data relating to all the

primary codes, accompanied by a recognition that there were similar patterns in the data that were behaving consistently across all institutions. Although the data and the subsequent analyses appear to be sound, in order to test the quality of the research it is necessary to evaluate its reliability, validity and generalisability.

Validity, Reliability and Generalisability

Each of these concepts describes a facet of the overall credibility of the research. For qualitative studies in particular, there is some contention in the literature about how this credibility can be evaluated, with a range of different approaches proposed. Traditional enquiry has largely been based on internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity, but a number of challenges are emerging to these criteria on the grounds of applicability and fitness for purpose. Steinke challenges the applicability of quantitative criteria and suggests alternative criteria for evaluation developed to take account of each individual study profile (Steinke 2000). The established evaluative approach of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity can be represented as truth value and applicability, consistency and neutrality (Seale 1999). However other concepts such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability command support (Miles and Huberman 1994; Denzin and Lincoln 2000; Boeije 2010), and these could be relevant criteria to evaluate this study. Although it is recognised that there are a number of approaches outlined in the literature, an evaluation of validity, reliability and generalisability will be appropriate for this study. This is because the research design allows these three dimensions to be applied accurately and appropriately to reflect the quality of the research. Each concept will be defined and then applied to the research questions within the context of the study.

Validity has several different meanings in the literature, but a common thread *is "the level of match between the reality studied and the reality reported"* (Punch 2005), or *"how proposed conceptual relationships correspond to observation"* (Meyer 2001). Establishing confidence in the truth of the findings is based on the validity of the data and the overall validity of the research, the

data need to be able to represent the phenomenon for which they stand, and confidence also relies on how well the different parts of the study fit together in a robust research design. The data were obtained from authoritative sources within a consistent framework, and so accurately represent the subject of the investigation. Although the focus of the study is on professional services managers, academic managers were also interviewed in each of the six institutions. This adds validity to the study as similar behaviours were confirmed by both groups as being an accurate reflection of the topic being explored. The choice of equivalent professional services and academic roles within each of the six institutions ensured direct and comparable alignment with core University activity.

The role of the interviewer was explicit and clearly understood by all participants. Each interviewee received the same explanation in the letter ahead of the interview and again at the outset of the interview, to establish a similar context. A good rapport was established although a level of formality was maintained so that the interview structure was applied consistently throughout the interview. Consistency was achieved because of the semi-structured approach of the questions, but the approach also needed to ensure a standard questioning style. As each interview progressed it could potentially become more informal, so care was taken not to lose direction. This also maintained validity as well as comparability between each interview. The design was relevant, clearly articulated and consistent across the case studies. Validity was strengthened by iterative reference to the research questions throughout the analysis, which was essential to maintain focus while probing into the data. For example, it would have been easy to stray into specific cross comparisons of the roles of Registrars, or Directors of Planning or Heads of Departments to see similarities and differences of how their particular roles operated in each of the institutional cases. However this would not have answered the research questions of this particular study. An appropriate balance was to analyse the data to answer the specific research questions in the study, and not to answer diverging questions. By constant reference back to the research questions and logic framework, validity of the study was maintained.

Respondents form the basis of the study's findings and the role of the researcher is to show the deeper underlying factors behind what is discovered. To do this, a level of objectivity is essential to confirm that the findings have been determined by the respondents, and not by the biases of the researcher. In particular, it was necessary to be continually aware of the impact of values on each stage of the process, particularly in basing decisions on respondent information, not personal views. Weaknesses and personal biases that threaten objectivity would include interpreting events as more cohesive and meaningful than they really are coupled with ignoring less structured aspects of the subject. Also the researcher might prioritise data from more senior managers over less senior managers, or lose perspective and accept without question the perceptions of the respondents.

Reliability describes the consistency of the findings, or *"the degree to which the finding is independent of the accidental circumstances of the research"* (Ansii 1997). Essentially, it is a determination of whether the findings would be repeatable with the same subjects in the same context. The accepted approach to reliability considers the two main aspects of consistency over time and internal consistency. In qualitative studies, the internal consistency of the measuring instrument becomes much more significant, for example whether or not the data taken from multiple data points describe a consistent internal pattern. This was the case with this study, for example when investigating shifts in decision making authority, all the respondent answers confirmed a consistent trend of centralisation of decision making, no matter where they were positioned in the organisation, or whether they were academic or professional services respondents. The research questions were clear and the design of the study was explicitly structured to answer them. Interviews were tape recorded and professionally transcribed, and the transcripts were coded in detail. This proved to be a rich source of information in terms of the content of what was revealed, the type of language used, pauses, laughter (suggesting values and assumptions), and the opportunity for respondents to volunteer information as well as answer questions. The guarantee of confidentiality enabled respondents to be completely honest about sensitive and controversial matters, which enriched the content and improved understanding of organisational dynamics. The

codes were applied with consistency to maintain reliability, and sub codes allowed refinement of the themes to a greater level of detail. As a confirmation of reliability, my interpretation and application of the codes was independently tested by an impartial colleague, and found to be both accurate and consistent.

Generalisability is *"the extent to which a finding in one setting can be applied more generally"* (Silverman 2005). Fundamental to this concept is whether or not the findings of a study have any wider significance, in that they can be transferred to other areas. In applying research to other contexts, Mintzberg outlines two main steps in inductive research, the tracking down of patterns, and a creative leap in which there is generalising beyond the data (Mintzberg 1979a). The strongest argument put forward against outcomes based on a small number of cases is that these findings are less generalisable. However this is challenged on the basis that the inferring process is based on the theoretical reasoning and its propositions, rather than typicality, representativeness or population size (Becher and Kogan 1992). Even though it might be argued that six case studies are too few to support generalisable findings, this study has both typicality and representativeness because of the nature of the sample in terms of both the roles and the institutions used. Purposive sampling has ensured that the respondents were able to offer information of direct relevance to the research question in terms of the professional services, academic perspectives, central and departmental issues, and the involvement of decision making. The respondents were specific enough to ensure a sound knowledge and experience base, but they were also diverse enough to offer both specific and wider data, and so create a greater likelihood of generalisation. Furthermore, the nature of semi-structured interviewing is that it allows respondents to offer information they think might be relevant, and the respondents used this opportunity particularly well, independently offering material that contributed significantly to the topic. This suggests a good match between the respondents and their ability to offer useful data as an evidence base, which increases both validity and generalisability. Such a strength is particularly important if a small group forms the basis of the sample, as the credibility of any findings lie in a robust

research design that results in deep and meaningful insight into the participants and the situation.

Linking the methodology to a particular context is usually a strength that supports meaningful analysis, however it can be a weakness when attempting to generalise. Other weaknesses can revolve around an excessive reliance on accessible and specific respondents and not gaining the views of wider sources. This can mean that non-representative information could be obtained and important material excluded. This is an unsound base from which to generalise, and was avoided because roles were selected because they exist in all Universities in one form or another. This has resulted in a representative sample that provides a platform for generalisation elsewhere. It should be noted that as the study is UK based, the generalisations will apply particularly to the UK with some relevance to an international context. The grounds for generalisation are based on typicality, representativeness and sound research design. The findings can be applied to a wider context as a potentially helpful contribution to understanding of developments in higher education.

3.5 Reflection and Discussion

Constant reflection is fundamental, and the impact of the insights gained has been referred to at relevant points in this commentary. However it is also worth remarking on two particular aspects that apply to the study as a whole. In particular, how the method has evolved over time and how the process of reflection shaped choices throughout the study.

Evaluation of how the method has evolved

One of the key methodological challenges was how to capture the complexity of Universities as organisations. A question that emerged at the outset of the research was whether it is actually possible to distinguish between a “centralised” University and a “decentralised” University. In reality most institutions are a mixture of centralised and decentralised functions. I tested this hypothesis with a focus group to see whether it was possible to categorise higher education institutions into centralised or decentralised

groups. The outcome of this exercise would then shape how the later study was approached. The academic governance framework of a University can be used to measure its organisational structure because teaching and research form the fundamental activities of an academic institution, and so are representative of how it structurally organises itself. The discussion revolved around whether it was feasible to classify institutions according to levels of centralisation of key institutional activities, with a view to assessing whether it might be worthwhile to group such samples as collective case studies. It was anticipated that such classification might be difficult, but this could not be confirmed until the hypothesis had been tested.

A focus group was established that consisted of senior staff drawn from institutions across the UK. Members were knowledgeable on current and likely future developments in higher education along with an understanding of the structure and process of decision making within higher education. The group as a whole had sound knowledge of the requirements of academic governance across a range of Universities in the UK, and the levels of autonomy present in the academic departments within these institutions. The key elements of institutional academic governance included: Development and resourcing of the academic portfolio; undergraduate admissions; programme approval, monitoring and review; academic governance of assessment; the institutional committee decision making framework. The group completed a questionnaire, in which these elements were each broken down into five contributory factors and then scored individually (see Appendix Two). Following this the elements were combined to identify institutions with highly centralised decision making, or those with some centralisation and some devolved authority, or where there were high levels of decentralisation and devolution of authority. Findings of the group confirmed a complex pattern of institutions with mixed centralisation and decentralisation of organisational structure and decision making. No overall distinction could be made between institutions. The greatest centralisation existed in relation to assessment and undergraduate admissions, otherwise patterns were highly variable. This exercise demonstrated that it was not possible to pre-group institutions according to organisational structure, so another approach had to

be found. The study was therefore designed around the purposive sample of six institutional cases.

Reflection throughout the study

Throughout the study it was necessary to ask self evaluative questions such as “What is the purpose of this action or decision?” or “How will its outcome affect the next stage?” The use of diagrams supported thinking, so at any stage when an idea was forming, Venn diagrams or logic sheets could be used to identify links on multiple levels to enable thorough reflection. Constant logging of impressions, ideas and field notes aided the recognition of emergent behaviours. This approach enabled reflection on the more tangible aspects of the study, but it also provided a platform for self evaluation at a more fundamental level. At each stage during the methodological decisions, it became a simultaneous step to ask more value laden questions such as “Why am I doing this?” or “What do I hope to achieve?” or “ How has my role and view of the world affected this decision?” Reflection occurred throughout the study, taking place both at the direct level of establishing the practical framework, and the indirect level of my own value set.

The values of the researcher have a particular effect within a qualitative approach, to evaluate potential impacts on the methodological steps taken. In this study, the effect of values appears to largely align along a primary strand that leads to two other strands as a consequence. Values mould the researcher’s worldview as a fundamental principle, which then shapes the choices made and the interpretation of the outcomes of the research. Taking each of these in turn, it is possible to build a view of the interplay between values and their influence on the decisions made. Firstly, the links between values and the researcher’s view of the world are mutually reinforcing perspectives that determine the choices made at every level. This is a particularly important factor when the researcher is the instrument, as in this study. These values shaped the choice of research topic, reflecting my view that this is a subject where there are important debates to which this research might possibly make a contribution. My values will also have influenced my view of other professional services managers and of the wider academic

community. Secondly, the choice of Universities as case studies indicated a value set that particularly focuses on the primacy of the role of such institutions within the UK higher education sector. The professionalisation of higher education management could have been explored at a national level, for example within government agencies such as the Funding Councils or the Quality Assurance Agency. The research question could have been adapted to examine another aspect of professionalisation within a different context. However, the current focus on institutions is where I believe worthwhile concepts may be explored, and this reflects my particular view of the world as a professional services manager working in a UK University. Thirdly, how the researcher interprets the data that emerge is another strand in considering the role of values. Developing this further, the interpretation of data is not just important during data analysis phases, but is significant throughout the study, particularly where initial evaluations of the data are then used to shape later methodological steps in the research. Specific knowledge based on familiarity with the subject may form part of a "preunderstanding" (Meyer 2001), which can be helpful but there may be a danger of preconceived ideas that shape interpretation. This might be by excluding challenging information and/or prematurely focusing on anticipated themes without having a necessary criticality, and then excluding other important information. When examining the role of values in this area Kerdeman notes succinctly that "as a mode of practical involvement and experience, understanding is never disinterested" (Kerdeman 1998). As a professional services manager researching into the professional services, this is a real issue. I tried to avoid such pitfalls by constantly reflecting at each stage, to exclude prejudgement and quite bluntly asking myself "Are my views affecting how I see this?" or "Am I biased?"

An interesting dimension around values related to the attitude of others to the substance of the research. I regarded the subject area as substantive enough to justify the core research question, but the ready acknowledgement by a number of individuals and their endorsement of the merits of this research topic was heartening. This reflected the fact that they recognised the potential of the research to explore significant issues even if their values differed from mine. I became aware of the significance of trust and control as related issues, and realised early in the fieldwork how the potential interplay between

these dynamics is integral to a successful interviewing strategy. The reason for this is that a shared sense of control augments a bond of trust between the interviewer and the respondent. Although I took the lead (which all the respondents expected), care was taken to establish a sense of equivalence. At the outset of each interview, I reaffirmed that all information was treated confidentially, and offered the interviewees a copy of the transcript, should they wish. Two respondents accepted this offer. These steps were effective in setting a positive tone for each interview, the knowledge that they could have a copy of the transcript was reassuring to the interviewees, offering them a sense of control and building a shared interest between us that added to the quality of the responses.

3.6 Conclusions on the method

The approach and method was selected based on an evaluation of the theoretical frameworks, with review questions that investigated the substantive topic in a specific context. Thought was given to any potential ethical considerations of the research and any sensitive issues that may arise. There are no ethical issues with the topic of study or the approach taken, and the research questions themselves are not sensitive. Participants are not vulnerable in any way, and are able to give informed consent or withdraw consent at any time. The information obtained from interviewees was not highly personal, but was confidential so as to protect their right to privacy. Overall, the ethical dimension to this study was not significant.

Critical realism is an appropriate perspective because it encourages a full exploration of causation and its links to events and experiences. Research questions have been established to explore the role and boundaries of professional services managers, and the effects of centralisation and decentralisation on the boundaries of decision making. The chosen methods for data collection have been developed with iterative reference to answering the research questions, which themselves are securely embedded within the literature. This approach is supported by iterative reference to the logic framework, which also demonstrates that the interview questions emerge directly from the four research questions. The six case studies have provided

a research study with large amounts of data generated from thirty interviews. These elements have together maximised the opportunities to generate useful findings, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

4 Chapter Four - Presentation of the Findings

4.1 Introduction

The higher education context is characterised by a shift from elite to mass higher education, expanding government intervention and the growing influence of a quasi market and a diversifying student body. As this external environment becomes more complex and resource constrained, it impinges on Universities and they begin to lose autonomy. The academic community has expertise that is highly subject rather than managerial, so Universities require a specifically skilled body of professional services staff to manage institutional engagement with the environment. This generates changes in roles and organisational structures, with shifts in decision making authority to deal with the simultaneous challenges of increased accountability, and the need to respond to rapidly evolving government and student demand. This chapter will summarise the key findings of the study, set against the four research questions that guided the investigation. It is important to note how the strategic centre is defined for the purposes of this study. This term refers to a senior core group that exists in all Universities in one form or another It usually consists of the Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellors, Pro Vice Chancellors, and Directors of Finance and Human Resources and the University Registrar or equivalent.

4.2 How the role and boundaries of professional services managers are changing the engagement with the academic body

A summary of the key findings in relation to role and boundaries reflected the role of professional services managers in interpreting the external environment and evaluating its impact, then shaping the internal priorities of the institution using management information as a tool. A broadly positive relationship between the professional services community and the academic body also emerged, with each group recognising the skills and qualities of its counterparts, particularly at more senior levels of the institution.

Roles of professional services managers and administrators

When asked about how their roles were used to exert influence, two aspects of the core roles of professional services managers had a particular bearing. The first was that an outward facing element is often a fundamental role requirement and a key platform from which other influences are built. The second aspect was the interpretive and evidential use of management information to shape organisational behaviour to meet institutional priorities. There was recognition of environmental impacts, and an ability to link this external knowledge with the interpretation of management information, using these two elements in tandem. All twenty five professional services staff had an awareness of how they used the combination of external awareness and directed management information to exert both formal and informal influence on decision making, with this awareness being most evident at senior levels. Academic managers also had externally facing elements to their role, although for all academic respondents this interaction was almost entirely within their subject discipline.

Professional services managers described contrasts and similarities in how they influence both academic and administrative staff. Similarities included the use of evidence and information to support an argument, and the translation of that evidence into the implications for departments and the institution. Both academic and professional services groups expected decisions to be explicitly based on evidence. The approach used was the same for both academic and administrative staff apart from a difference that perhaps reflects a “sense of singularity” of academic staff, and a “sense of the group” of administrative staff. These views of the world crucially affected the terms of reference against which any dialogue took place. When professional services managers were seeking to influence the academic community the argument revolved around the principles underpinning an idea or philosophy, the reason behind why a particular decision was necessary and possible consequences for the subject discipline. When seeking to influence administrative staff, the argument revolved around intention, structure and purpose with consideration of how these elements would unfold in practice,

and any potential institutional effects. This appreciation of the impact of a singular or collective view of the world shaped the fundamental approach:

"With academic staff, even if you're talking to groups, you're really talking to a collection of individuals, there is no such thing as a flock of academics because, you know, they just don't flock basically. With administrative staff there is a much stronger sense of structure, and a realisation of who's responsible for what. So in the way of influencing, when I have a discussion about how something is going to look with academics ….. that will be an essentially different discussion than talking about the same topics with departmental administrators, or people in central services. Because what they will be looking for is clarity of structure, and with a lot of the academics, what they will be looking for is a clarity of direction, the underlying principles…"
(Head of Quality)

Both the principles and the practice are necessary to argue a case to its fullest extent, but the focus on principles for academic staff and practice for administrative staff emerged as key theme and expressed itself in a number of ways. There was also a strong sense of the need to achieve engagement from all participants, and a recognition of the need to genuinely persuade staff of a particular case or argument:

"If I haven't got the academic community on board, nothing's going to change"
(Head of Quality)

Professional services managers reported varying forms of role accretion, usually in relation to achieving key institutional priorities. In some institutions this accretion was quite significant where major areas of responsibility had been moved into the professional services sphere of management. This led to an explicitly recognised and increased authority. Role accretion was noted particularly for Academic Registrars and Directors of Planning. These respondents reported that the broadening of their areas of responsibility also increased their ability to evaluate the wider impact of decisions, which in turn augmented their effectiveness in either reinforcing or mitigating the direction of travel of the organisation.

All respondents identified an increasing impact of the corporate executive on the academic aspects of their institutions, which was seen more positively at the centre than in the departments. This study defines executive decisions as those taken as part of the corporate decision making structure, rather than the academic decision making structure. A recurrent theme was that because of the nature of their roles, professional services managers often operate at the articulation points of the executive and the deliberative functions of a University. Some respondents noted that while academic governance should have primacy, the need to adapt to an increasingly turbulent environment with diminishing resources meant that executive decision making was increasingly needed to underpin academic activity. This view was most marked among the professional services respondents, in particular the six Directors of Planning and the six Academic Registrars. Some managers noted that to keep academic activity separate from executive activity was an artificial premise, and successful institutions were able to actively manage the integration of both types of decision making at all levels in the organisation.

"… the best administration combines both the executive and the deliberative" (Academic Registrar)

Given the nature of the roles, to some degree these views might be anticipated, however three of the six Heads of Department also confirmed increased executive pressures, as did two of the six professional services staff in the departments. While broadly speaking the reports on increased executive influence were positive, it is necessary to also acknowledge the potential disadvantages of an increasing executive influence.

Roles of academic managers

All six Heads of Department reported a growing conflict between managing academic departments and continuing with research as managerial pressures and expectations increase. This academic and managerial conflict was also highlighted by the twenty five professional services managers and administrators, who recognised the challenges faced by their academic colleagues. A number of respondents identified issues in terms of managing the academic community as a body, with its particular culture of

independence, desire for individual autonomy and consultation. There was recognition of the need to develop skills to meet the increasingly demanding requirements of the role. Both academic and professional services respondents recognised specific managerial skills of professional services managers as a core part of their roles. One Head of Department compared and contrasted her own role with that of the professional services managers that she worked with:

"I see people who are much better at it than I am….. Sometimes you do see people who have that... I think that part of being an academic manager, there's probably quite a big tendency for us to be quite used to muddling through on the administrative and management side of things, cause you know we're not professionals. We muddle through. Sometimes you recognise people who are actually approaching it in a somewhat different way and are using their analytical abilities in that management...."
(Head of Department)

In four of the six institutions, there was institutional recognition of the need for formalised development of management skills in academic Heads of Department, however this message could be blurred by concurrent institutional expectations that department heads should also be highly research active. This lack of a clear view on the relative merits of research commitment against management expectations was compounded in those institutions where the Head of Department role was rotational.

All thirty respondents highlighted the importance of informal networks to their roles, and contact with peer groups as being of particular value. In particular, three Heads of Department expressed a strong preference for peer groups that addressed corporate business such as budgets, HR issues, performance management and other executive matters, rather than groups that primarily discussed academic matters. Professional services managers recognised academic activity as the core business of a University, but they also commented that academic staff are often promoted based on research achievement and subject expertise, and are often ill equipped to deal with

managerial roles. This was also recognised by the academic managers, although both groups believed this situation was likely to change.

The overall view of professional services managers was supportive and collegial towards academic Heads of Department. Several professional service respondents expressed their view that academic managers need the assistance of institutions to help them to professionalise. They also noted that the Head of Department role needed added clarity on the part of institutions, otherwise the roles – and the individuals within them – were less likely to succeed.

"What I'm not sure is that the Heads of School and the academic managers have that clarity and are supported enough to make them good managers. Even the ones who've chosen it, have often chosen it out of being a good academic and we [the institution] need to help them, otherwise we are not being fair to them…"
(Academic Registrar)

In three of the six institutions, the Head of Department role was rotational for a period of three years. Of these three institutions, one also had rotational Deans and rotational Pro Vice Chancellors alongside the rotational Heads of Department. In the remaining four institutions the Head of Department role was a substantive appointment following a competitive process of selection. One institution had recently moved from rotational roles to permanent appointments. Both professional services managers and academic managers cited clear conflicts of priority for academic managers, with this in evidence most clearly at Head of Department level. Respondents also noted the managerial and research conflict at Dean level, again this was compounded where the Deans were rotational. Furthermore, whereas professional services managers generally operated within a clear hierarchy and a good understanding of their roles, academic managers often did not have this clarity of expectation, and this could sometimes cause difficulties for them. Rotational Head of Department roles were typically held for three years, which both groups of respondents regarded as a short time period in

managerial terms, in one of the three institutions a second rotational term was strongly encouraged.

Both academic managers and professional services managers (twenty eight from thirty), reported that the rotational role adversely affected decision making in that it could become short term. Reasons for this included a view that learning the role took time to build confidence to take major decisions, successors might not continue the decision outcome into the future, and potentially contentious decisions within the academic body were more likely to be avoided. Academic managers offered a number of views, which were typically along the lines below:

"I guess the biggest difference and this would affect decision making, is that Professional Managers will operate within a fairly established hierarchical structure, they'll know exactly where they are, they'll be on a career path of their own which will generally take them up that hierarchy. The oddness of Academic Managers within, I don't know how common this is, I imagine now the majority of British Universities is that Heads of Department are on rotation, I mean we're Heads of Department for three years then we go back to being just a member of staff and somebody else takes on the role of Head of Department. I think that inevitably has an impact on the way you approach academic decision making..."
(Head of Department)

Professional services managers reported that the rotational aspect could adversely affect the quality of their relationship with Heads of Department, as they continually had to deal with a turnover of academic staff with whom they had built a relationship, and then had to begin again with a new incumbent. Rotational roles also had an organisational impact due to a lack of accountability, because role holders were either dealing with the effects of decisions made by predecessors, so were not responsible for their outcomes, or were making decisions for which they not could not be held responsible.

All six academic managers highlighted clear implications for their individual role as well as impaired decision making continuity for the organisation.

This view was also clearly reflected in the responses of the professional services respondents:

"We don't have very much time for them to become trained and become familiar with what it is they have to do. They have a very, very steep learning curve and they've got an extremely tough job anyway being stuck in the middle between the departments, the departmental staff and the central requirements. I think it's actually much more difficult because it's rotational, because they've only got a few years to get used to it and then just when they're beginning to get the hang of it they hand it over to somebody else.
(Director of Planning)

Where academic managers were management in their role, they had similar priorities to professional services managers, with a comparable need to become more managerial in the future. Respondents from both groups implicitly suggested an increasing alignment of academic managers with professional services managers, which could be interpreted as contributing to an overall trend towards the professionalisation of management.

Engagement between professional services and academic communities

Both academic and professional services respondents held a common view in two important respects. Firstly, that in managerial terms it could be more challenging to be an academic manager given the culture and outlook of the body of staff being managed, particularly if there was a lack of clarity about the Head of Department role and organisational expectations. Secondly, both groups articulated a view that professional services managers were often better equipped to carry out more contentious decisions, and to use performance management as a tool to achieve specified outcomes. Reasons offered by respondents in both groups were that professional services managers had been appointed to their roles and so usually had an appropriate skill set, a willingness to manage difficult situations, a clearer remit within which to operate and a distinct view of the notion of managing. These expectations were all set within a tangible career structure.

Academic managers recognised the managerial skills of the professional services managers, and that these skills were a core part of their roles:

"…..the Professional Services Manager, my impression is that they are more professional in the way that they manage, but it is a career, a career choice and a career move."
(Head of Department)

Some respondents commented that it could be an advantage that there was an expectation that professional services managers would be more managerial. They were permitted to be more proactive in taking difficult decisions, because culturally this is how everyone expected them to behave. Academic managers had greater difficulty because they were not expected to act in this way, and there was a cultural perception by the academic community that an academic manager would be less managerial:

"Within academic management there's much less tolerance of that whole notion of managing, of management at all. So I think we are expected to be a bit more managerial."
(Director of Planning)

In terms of relationships between the professional services and academic communities, individual relationships were highly valued by all thirty respondents. The managers cited a mutual respect with each group recognising the value of the skill set of the other, particularly at more senior levels of the organisation. At departmental level, ten respondents noted that administrative staff are valued by academic staff in terms of the support they offer, but their skills could often go unrecognised. A distinction was drawn between a general view (which might be negative), and a specific view of individual administrative or academic staff (which was usually positive).

This dichotomy did not escape respondents, who drew a distinction between immediate links and the wider approach of the institution, which was seen as less supportive:

"At the level of individual relationships generally I'd say they get on quite well, but once you go beyond the individual to the general, what you would hear

them say is that we have these individual relationships in spite of what goes on around us rather than because of the context within we operate."
(Head of Department)

In terms of the engagement between professional services and academic communities, the findings suggest a pattern of behaviour and decision making that could be termed a *New Collegiality.* This concept expands the notion of traditional collegial debate based solely on subject disciplines, and represents a wider sense of shared interests and discussion, with a realisation of academic management aims and good practice. As Heads of Department recognised how the institution was using management information for decision making, they learnt to work collaboratively to maximise the benefits to their academic activity through faculty mechanisms, rather than multiple departmental conversations with the centre. Heads of Department who had not previously supported their departments being brought together within a faculty were now changing their approach because the benefits had become more apparent to them. Academic managers also commented positively on the use of academic peer groups to discuss management rather than academic business. These groups consisted of Heads of Department and were convened to offer mutual support for particular purposes or projects, rather than being part of conventional committees of the Senate or Academic Board. Closer working between academic and professional services managers was increasingly evident, and *New Collegiality* offered novel approaches to decision making that were direct outcomes of the synergies between professional services and academic managers working together in particular ways. The findings suggested that this combination brought together key strengths of collegial debate combined with information management and interpretation, and developed new collegial thinking as a result. These ideas point to potentially significant developments in the professionalisation of higher education, and will be discussed further in the next chapter.

4.3 The effects of centralised or decentralised organisational structure on the role of professional services managers

A summary of the key findings highlighted parallel patterns of decentralising structure but centralising decision making in the six institutions, with the establishment of faculties or colleges as an intermediate tier between the departments and the centre. Professional services managers reported fewer contacts but each interaction was more constructive. Managers switched readily between operating through structure or through function to achieve their objectives.

Organisational structure and the effects on management activity

All six institutions had broadly similar decision making bodies that operated in a typical manner across institutions, for both executive decision making and academic decision making. The broad model for executive decision making was a high level strategic decision making group that sat within a wider strategic decision making group. The senior authoritative group typically consisted of an institutionally relevant combination of Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Pro Vice Chancellor, Registrar, Secretary, Director of HR, Director of Finance and Director of Estates as a senior management team. The next level group consisted of the senior management team plus the Deans of Faculty, Directors of Service, Deans of Research, Deans of Teaching and Learning, and other similar roles, which would vary contingently according to each institutional context.

In terms of academic decision making, the primary body was the Senate or Academic Board, which delegated responsibility for key areas of academic activity to other committees with terms of reference to cover a range of matters including research, teaching and learning, academic quality, ethics and other components of the academic endeavour. This tier of the organisation demonstrated a broadly similar approach in structure to reflect the main strands of academic activity. Underpinning this was a much more varied tier across the institutions, with sub committees supporting the higher level committees to more specifically reflect institutional mission and focus.

All six institutions were undergoing significant organisational change. Nomenclature could vary between faculty or college, school or department, but essentially the pattern was the same, and showed a trend towards a reduction in the number of departments, as well as and grouping them together under faculties, and the removal of schools from the structure by merging them into faculties. This created a broad pattern of three tiers, with an "intermediate tier" of either a faculty or college, which in practice served the same purpose between the centre and the departments. This tier had the overview of the "core unit" usually called a department or school, which was the primary location of academic teaching and research. The reduction in the number of departments could be significant. In one institution the number of departments was reduced from thirty down to nineteen. In terms of quantity, there was a notable consistency of structure of three or four bodies at the intermediate tier, and between nineteen and twenty three bodies at the core unit. The organisational structures are summarised below.

Table 3 Institutional Organisational Structures - March 2010

Institution	Intermediate Tier College or Faculty	Core Unit School or Department
University A	4 Faculties	21 (including 2 Schools)
University B	3 Colleges	23 Schools
University C	4 Faculties	19 Departments
University D	4 Faculties	22 Departments
University E	4 Colleges	20 Departments
University F	4 Faculties	19 Departments

The six institutions included one member of the Russell Group and two members of the 1994 Group of Universities, and three post 1992 Universities.

Respondents were asked to consider how their organisation was structured in terms of how it is centralised or decentralised, and whether there had been any recent changes to this structure. Twenty nine of thirty respondents either explicitly or implicitly reflected a strong promotion of a decentralisation message by the strategic centre. Their answers also confirmed a simultaneous centralising of decision making, although some respondents did not always recognise this, and seemed unaware of the implications of their answers. Other respondents were acutely aware of these parallel dynamics.

Respondents described a pattern of how the strategic centre would promote a message of devolution of authority to departments, but in practice used key requirements to retain or centralise control. This could be indicated by the creation of faculties ostensibly to move decision making out from the centre to a faculty or college, but in parallel move decision making authority (and in two cases, also all budgetary responsibilities) from the departments to the faculties. The overall trend was to centralise control away from departments, and create mechanisms for making them more accountable. Heads of Department could see certain benefits in terms of improving access to central decision making, but in some cases they were concerned that the strategic centre would not recognise the broad range of activity taking place in departments:

"I think what they're trying to do is put in place a structure that will work …… I think that they are trying to put in place a structure that will work for them, which I can fully understand, if I was in their position I would do the same, the question is will that structure work for us."
(Head of Department)

The other organisational trend of reducing the number of departments creating fewer, larger departments was promoted by the centre as increasing the influence of the role of Heads of Department. A raised profile for Heads of Department could indeed result from this decision, although another effect was that fewer, larger units could be held more accountable by the centre. The operation of the professional services emerged as key to this movement in two ways. Firstly, as developers and interpreters of the management

information used by the strategic centre to justify and validate decisions to the departments. Secondly, through the creation of senior administrative posts in the faculties/colleges, and to a lesser extent within the departments, then using these staff to support departmental accountability systems. The way in which professional services staff were structured was seen by all the professional services respondents as being fundamental to implementation of institutional decisions. This may well reflect the particular perspective of these managers, and other groups may not recognise this as either a favourable or a significant factor. Respondents saw the intermediate tier of a faculty or college as an influential structure in between departments and the strategic centre, however, while the influence of this organisational tier was recognised, it could be perceived that this had both positive and negative aspects. Faculty and departmental respondents perceived changes in structure as improving access to central decision making, and they had accepted the institutional view that their profile would be raised. Centrally based respondents also agreed with this view, although they also saw that it made the departments much more accountable as the same organisational channels that permitted potential access to the centre would also permit greater accountability to the centre. Organisational changes generated different views depending whether respondents were based at the centre or in the departments.

All respondents were asked whether they detected any shifts in authoritative decision making, twenty eight of thirty respondents confirmed they saw an increasing authority of professional services managers, and a growing ability for them to shape decision making. The two respondents who did not explicitly confirm this were a Departmental Administrator and one academic Head of Department, who commented that he had not seen direct evidence of it himself. A recurrent theme of better informed decision making using accurate management information and with a better understanding of the institutional impact of decision outcomes emerged.

Effects of structure on the roles of professional services managers

The professional services respondents were highly aware of the effects of organisational structure on how they carried out their role. Those based at the centre were quite clear that their role was based on an institutional perspective, to support departments by providing a framework through which local staff could operate. These respondents highlighted the need for a balance between subject areas, and noted that a key difference between academic and professional services managers related to an institutional rather than a subject level approach:

"I think the central stuff by nature has to be broader, you can't focus on one thing, whereas as a Head of School, if you're the Head of School for Computer Science, Computer Science is what you think about. And although you need to have a corporate role in that you're supposed to fit within the strategic plan or whatever, your focus is on that, whereas I think as a central professional Head your focus is on the whole business and if the Business School's got loads of money and Philosophy's got nothing, how can we make the student experience still as good. It's those kind of differences really."
(Academic Registrar)

Advantages cited included a reduced number of contacts that generally created fewer, but more purposeful engagements. This was contrasted with a previous situation of a high number of contacts with departments that became more routine because they were so numerous. Decisions were better informed with the intermediate tier in place, and so the roles of professional services managers could be conducted more effectively. The faculty/college tier could be an organisational barrier by preventing direct access to the departments, but centrally based managers had developed mechanisms for dealing with this. Where organisational structures were having a negative impact, professional services managers would carry out their role by switching their focus to function rather than structure. To do this they used their authority over specific activities to bypass any perceived organisational obstacle or barrier, to gain access to the right faculty or departmental staff.

Building on from the point above, another effect of organisational structure was in the capacity of professional services managers to use levels of centralised or decentralised structure to influence academic staff, as well as some of the work they are expected to undertake. The creation of an intermediate tier permitted closer scrutiny of department affairs via a faculty or college, and management information became key to this. The interpretation of information, awareness of the external environment and greater accountability of departments placed professional services managers in a strong position to influence both local and strategic decision making. All fifteen centrally based professional services managers reported an increased authority, although the six faculty/department based administrators did not recognise this for themselves, they could see the growing authority of their centrally based administrative colleagues. Whereas departmental staff noticed little difference, senior professional services staff in the faculties reported some increased authority. Where this was less marked at departmental level, possibly because staff tend to be more junior in the organisation, certain institutions had taken steps to explicitly professionalise the roles of administrative staff. This was in always in conjunction with administrative staff of sufficient seniority placed in faculties, who could offer overall steerage either by acting as role models to shape thinking or with direct line management or influence.

Characteristics of professionalising departmental administration included softening the links between departmental academic structures and their administrative support, amending line management reporting and placing administrative staff in teams with administrative staff from other departments. These teams were co-located together rather than with academic staff, which permitted sharing of knowledge, generic tasks and workload to maximise the use of administrators' time. However this approach physically distanced administrators from the academic staff they were working with, and is a key point to consider. While from one perspective there may be benefits from this relocation, such as sharing of good administrative practice, this could be offset by perceived barriers due to the physical distance between academic staff and their departmental administrative support. This would understandably be regarded in a negative way from other perspectives.

Outcomes of these changes was that professionalisation of administrative staff at departmental level appeared to aid career progression and the creation of opportunities such as new roles or regrading to higher grades:

You get the efficiencies, we can't ever go back to nine different ways of doing things. With a clear structure for admin staff we can give them a clear career path. We can't do that if it's organised differently in the nine different schools. (Director of Planning)

Line management of professional services staff in academic departments was reported by both academic and professional services respondents as being key to organisational cohesiveness and control. Key posts involved in these discussions were Academic Registrars and Faculty Registrars on the one hand, and Deans and Heads of Department on the other. In general terms, all these groups wished to have line management of departmental administrators, but for different reasons. Professional services managers saw line management of departmental administrative staff as a key element of influence, but also for professionalisation and operational effectiveness at local level. Academic staff also wished to retain control of administrative staff, as they saw line management of the staff by others as an indirect threat to their operational autonomy. Line management of Faculty/College Registrars was perceived to be particularly important, because of the seniority of the role within faculty administration and as a pivotal post in implementing central decisions within the departments. Whether there was line management of the Faculty/College Registrars to the Academic Registrar or to the Dean was a key issue. In general, the more senior the administrator, the stronger their view that they wished to be line managed by other administrators, they were more explicitly managed and being part of an administrative framework was felt to be more effective and to foster improved professional development and career opportunities.

4.4 Decisions in terms of evidence, options and implementation

A summary of the key findings highlighted how management information was permeating all aspects of decision making, respondents in both the professional services and the academic groups noted greater transparency

around decisions. Centrally based respondents noted the increase in departmental accountability, and the increased role of professional services managers in implementing central decisions at a local level, to balance strategic and operational decision making.

The use of management information as an evidence base for decisions

Management information as defined in this study was used broadly for corporate financial modelling, business intelligence, and for linking these with academic policy and strategic direction. It included technical information (institutional and departmental targets, student numbers, research income), actual data (populations/assumptions), financial dimensions of the institution (such as strategic planning, operating costs), and capacity dimensions of the institution. This information also included government policy developments, which needed to be anticipated and then interpreted. This predictive function was seen as key to institutional strategy and planning, and was generally performed by Academic Registrars, Directors of Planning and Heads of Quality, who had a key influence on institutional policy through this medium.

A clear theme from professional services respondents was the power and influence, both explicit and implicit, of management information for decision making. Twenty three of the twenty five professional services respondents reported significant use of management information as an evidence base with which to shape decision making. This view was strongest in Directors of Planning, Academic Registrars and Heads of Quality. The alignment of growing authority of professional services managers with their translational use of management information was reflected in the answers of twenty four of the twenty five professional services respondents, and three of the five academic respondents. All managers identified the increased availability of more detailed information on a wider range of areas, and the impact on strategic direction. Better informed decision making and strategic planning were benefits identified at departmental level in particular. This was as a direct result of Heads of Department acquiring a greater understanding of the value of the information to their own departmental development, and how to work more effectively with the professional services. The creation of the

intermediate tier also added another dimension so that departmental intelligence was set within a faculty or college context rather than in isolation, and this offered an increased number and range of planning options. Most respondents (twenty seven of thirty) explicitly commented that the quality of the decision making process had improved with management information, and that decision outcomes were more informed as a result. It could be seen that there were also comments from several respondents that sound management information offered greater certainty about the wisdom of key decisions, and what their likely outcome might be. This was noted both in terms of the decisions themselves, and benchmarking against the sector norms in any given area:

"So we wouldn't have been able to make this decision with any degree of confidence if we hadn't had a lot of intelligence about what was going on in the sector, what the real constraints were."
(Director of Planning)

The dual nature of increased transparency and increased accountability was reflected more in the answers of centrally based respondents. This allowed better forward planning and consideration of budgetary implications, which then enabled closer examination of the strengths and weaknesses of a department and so more effective decision making.

Professional services respondents in particular noted that departments would be subject to greater scrutiny by faculties/colleges than they had been by the centre, because the faculties themselves would be held accountable. Management information was disaggregated at a number of levels to shape decision making. A number of respondents discussed a greater reliance on performance management generally, with increased use of key performance indicators (which were invariably decided by the centre), departmental score cards and risk assessments applied to departmental developments. One institution used a set of agreed key performance indicators to establish a threshold which was then explicitly used to measure programme performance, if the programme fell below this threshold it was deemed to be

at risk, and this position would be discussed in a number of open fora within the institution.

The internal distribution of resources across departments can be contentious, and professional services managers used management information as a way of informing decision making to allocate resources more fairly, according to agreed criteria. This treated different subject areas more equitably, and professional services managers saw themselves as moderators to ensure consistency of decision making for competing resources:

"I think at the end of the day, an academic is an academic is an academic and they're passionate and parochial about their own subject, they can't help it, and I wouldn't want them any other way, you know what I mean. But that is a tension, if you talk to an engineer they're never going to think the philosophers have sway in anything, and vice versa. When you're talking about budgets or money or resources or whatever, they will go to type ..."
(Academic Registrar)

Both academic and professional services respondents reported a changing use of management information by academic staff, in that they more frequently accessed information direct for themselves, rather than relying on administrative staff in departments to provide it for them. This had come about due to changing expectations, as students expect academic staff to have familiarity with student information, and academic staff need to use the same information base as students. Significant increases in student numbers had accelerated this process for academic staff dealing with larger groups:

"I think there's more people realising this is a business to run, and it has to follow business kind of operations …. information is key, it has to be at the fingertips of everyone, it has to be timely, instant and available to all. And therefore you have to change cultures, everything's about self service and everything's about instancy. So whereas in 1998 we were designing processes carried out in back offices, now you're designing processes so a student can do it themselves. An Academic can see somebody's record. In 1998 no Academic had ever touched a student record system, that's what the administrators did, "I'm not interested in that", now of course its "well I need to

see what my student can see, I need to offer them choices" all that kind of stuff, so in a way we've matured about what we're trying to do.
(Academic Registrar)

Data to support strategic planning and decision making was centrally driven in all institutions because most of the data emanates from corporate databases. However issues could emerge in organisations with higher levels of decentralisation, for example, in one institution student numbers were calculated differently by the departments compared to the centre, which had significant implications for statutory returns to the Funding Bodies.

Implementation of strategic and operational decisions

Respondents from the professional services particularly highlighted the significance of an appropriate balance of strategic and operational decision making to achieve organisational objectives. In particular, professional services managers were acutely aware of the necessity of accessing the right mix of knowledgeable staff at all levels in the organisation to drive implementation of decisions, and for addressing each stage of detail:

"...we're also always managing difficult communication for every layer of the University and you have to think very carefully about the big picture and small detail and having that sort of dual vision and ability to think about the University in its entirety and what's important but also understanding how it's going to impact on little component parts."
(Head of Quality)

This appeared to emerge from the broad organisational knowledge of the professional services, a key factor for success was that they knew which staff were likely to be necessary for implementation of institutional projects. Both academic and professional services respondents described the professional services as an "engine" for institutional implementation of projects:

"…. you get institutional initiatives taken forward, because if you have got a framework of the professional services, through the standardisation that you're more likely to get organisational initiatives taken forward .."
(Head of Quality)

This was seen as a key contribution of the professional services to wider institutional success. Frameworks for academic governance are closely related to the organisational structures of Universities, because academic teaching and research form their core academic business, and so it is reasonable to accept that institutional systems for academic governance reflect the wider organisational structure. Changes to quality systems were reported by respondents as an increasing mechanism for wider organisational change. For example, organisational restructuring might be the primary aim of a corporate initiative, however it was presented as a change to improve academic teaching quality. Respondents commented that management information was increasingly used in quality assurance, in areas where it had not been previously. In particular, management information as an organisational tool was increasing institutional and executive influence on programme approval and wider portfolio management. A recurrent theme of better informed and more transparent evidence emerged, from respondents based both centrally and in the departments. A key effect of this was to be able to evaluate the full impact of a decision at both strategic and local levels, and this aided implementation of decisions. Professional services managers influenced this decision making in five ways: In environmental scanning across subject disciplines, by interpretation of management information, by linking external factors and internal information with recognition of organisational interconnections, by operating at the articulation points between the corporate executive with the academically deliberative, and by setting all this activity within an institutional framework to implement strategic and operational objectives. The articulation points between the executive and the deliberative strands of the organisation emerge as key shapers of institutional behaviour, for example, in the way portfolio planning is directed by both academic and corporate business intelligence, where decisions are based on an often delicate interplay between the two strands.

Respondents reported an increasing use of key individuals to take decisions that were once taken by committees. This often signalled a more executive type of decision making, with a move away from the approach of the collegium. For example, in one institution individual staff made decisions on the appointment of external examiners, set against clearly articulated

institutional criteria and thresholds, where similar decisions had previously been made by an academic committee. Respondents in this institution reported an explicit match between structure and behaviour, with a clear need to allocate responsibility, then to permit the authority to make relevant decisions. However, it must be recognised that this is a model in one institution, and would not be appropriate for almost all other Universities.

4.5 The effects of centralised or devolved organisational structure on the decision making of professional services managers

A summary of the key findings related to all six institutions notionally decentralising structure while centralising decision making. Professional services managers reported increased authority through the use of management information to shape decision making. A clear trend was an increased accountability of academic departments, both to faculties/colleges and the centre. This was also accompanied by the establishment of senior administrative posts in the intermediate tier, which acted as a mechanism to augment this increased accountability. This took place alongside the management of the implementation of central decisions at a departmental level, supporting the effects of organisational change, which in reality also increased departmental accountability.

Dynamics between organisational structure and decision making

In response to changes in organisational structure, respondents described the creation of fewer faculties/colleges where previously there had been a large number of departments. This process was a strong trend across all six institutions, with each using the same reasons used to justify the organisational changes. The explicit message from the strategic centre was of decentralisation in order to improve responsiveness to departments. It was argued that this direct access to the centre would raise the profile and authority of the departments and the Heads of Department:

"So one of the arguments we were sold for the faculty structure was that it would move the decision making much closer to Departments and make it more transparent."
(Head of Department)

Respondents presented a mixed picture of this strategy. All respondents agreed that for decisions emanating from departments there may be increased responsiveness from the centre via an intermediate tier. However, for decisions emanating from the centre the intermediate tier may delay decision outcomes, as it could act as a barrier. It was noted that the creation of faculties or colleges as larger organisational units created an improved awareness of the impact of decisions on the institution as a whole. When exploring links between shifts in authoritative decision making and levels of centralisation or devolution, respondents described a pattern of organisational shift outwards from the centre and decision making authority inwards from the departments. Both trends appeared to meet at the intermediate tier to build a level of authority within the faculties/colleges. This then became a mechanism for making departments more accountable to both faculties or colleges and the centre, and the faculties/colleges themselves were also accountable to the centre. These findings bring together a potentially mutually reinforcing combination of centralising organisational behaviour occurring simultaneously with a directed use of the professional services to embed centrally influenced senior administrative decision making into the departments.

When respondents were asked about the reasons driving organisational change, the need to respond to a rapidly changing environment and a reduced resource base were given as primary reasons. Increases in accountability were also highlighted, with a need to have appropriate standardisation of practice across the institution:

"We couldn't introduce any system without consulting each of the nine faculties and trying to get a system that matched all nine of their individual special needs. Everything turned out to be a camel designed by a committee." (Director of Planning)

The dual impact of devolving structure while centralising decision making through management information was recognised by respondents at the centre. There was a sense that the departments had not yet realised the full implications of these changes, and the consequent shifts in authority. Some respondents reported a tension with the introduction of faculties in

organisations with powerful departments accustomed to high degrees of autonomy. A particular issue might be where the authority formally created by the structure (the intermediate tier or departments), did not match where decision making operated in reality (the strategic centre). A detailed knowledge of how different areas of the organisation link together is integral to the role of professional services managers, and they use this background knowledge of one area to shape decision making in another area. Managers saw the value and strength of the links between the organisational areas, and they were able to use this organisational interconnectivity both formally and informally. This skill set was used to define the boundaries within which decisions were based at the outset of a decision making process, for example particularly in shaping how the organisation responded to its environment. It could be argued that if the relevance of interconnectivity is not realised, there may be diminished institutional confidence in taking forward wide ranging organisational projects, as well as increased logistical difficulties in implementing them on the ground.

The effects of organisational structure on decision making

Respondents generally acknowledged that devolution of decision making can lead to highly differential practice. Position within the organisation had a clear effect on the answers given, respondents based in departments saw differential practice as a strength, if respondents were located at the centre they saw this as high risk. Academic managers highlighted the importance of variability, and this was reflected to a lesser extent by the department based professional services respondents. Professional services managers reported that the creation of faculties fundamentally changed the nature of the contact between the centre and the departments. Although it possibly lengthened the time taken to make decisions, these were achieving much more effective outcomes. Key benefits appeared to be that larger units introduced stability to decision making with a consequent ability to plan more effectively. The cumulative effects of decisions taken at local level on the institution as a whole could be anticipated and factored into potential outcomes:

"So I would actually say by and large it's probably lengthened the decision making process but it's given way to better considered decisions that affect

the Institution as a whole. So from a corporate point of view it's a better approach, and a much simpler approach, and you're dealing with groups and Departments and you're balancing the needs of wider groups and Departments which must be better than dealing with individual issues."
(Director of Planning)

Academic managers reported that the establishment of faculties had increased collaboration between departments both in terms of research bids and provision of programmes. Some academic managers identified areas where a collegial approach could be less effective, noting that votes with equal decision weight did not work in academic departments of unequal size. Where smaller schools or departments had an equivalent input into wider organisational decisions as the larger schools, opinions carried equal weight, but decision outcomes might have a different impact on larger schools compared to their smaller counterparts, and vice versa.

In devolved structures the need for clearly differentiated roles and titles was highlighted as particularly important by professional services managers, usually Heads of Quality. Where there was a lack of clarity because of devolved structures, it became increasingly difficult to establish where responsibility lay for key activities, which would be highlighted by differences in nomenclature. This had significant consequences for identifying ownership of effective decision making, and securing accountability for outcomes. In this situation, Heads of Quality would work closely with Academic Registrars and Heads of Department in clarifying structures for academic governance.

Some respondents within the professional services noted that devolved organisational structure could potentially deskill administrative staff in departments, particularly in small departments where staff might be employed at less senior grades. Administrative staff could become less confident about accepting responsibility potentially feeling disempowered to make decisions and constantly referring back to the centre for validation. This situation could be exacerbated by constant management change and resulting loss of organisational memory. Professional services managers, particularly Academic Registrars and to a lesser extent Heads of Quality, commented that

a key aspect of increasing the confidence of departmental administration was the introduction of senior administrative roles into faculties. This was seen as fundamental to sound decision making within departmental administration, as well as using staff resource more effectively. Academic Registrars in particular highlighted the benefits on the overall effectiveness of departmental administration if Faculty/College Registrars were responsible for the line management of departmental administrators, rather than such staff reporting to Heads of Department. However, this view could be challenged on the basis that this argument simply reflected the perspective of these particular respondents, and effectiveness could be measured using different criteria.

Having outlined the findings of the study, it is appropriate to confirm that these reflect the review and research questions based on the substantive topic. Two initial review questions were used to critically evaluate the literature and explore how the roles of individual professional services managers are adapting to the rapidly evolving context of the higher education sector. These review questions were articulated against two more review questions that explored changes taking place in decision making by professional services managers and the effects of organisational structure on management activity. This matrix of four review questions was then used to generate four research questions, interview questions were developed from each research question that specifically aligned to each quadrant of the matrix. In this way it was confirmed that the findings were appropriately drawn from the interview questions, which themselves are a tool to test the research questions. The findings have been mapped back to the original framework first noted in the Methodology chapter (Table 2, Chapter 3.1), and are therefore explicitly linked to both the literature review and the resulting research questions. The key points are summarised overleaf.

Table 4 Key findings - Relationships between Roles, Decision Making and Organisational Structure in Universities

Review Questions	What Changes in the Boundaries of Professional Services Management are taking place?	What are the Effects of Organisational Structure on Management Activity?
How are the Roles of Professional Services Managers evolving?	Using external knowledge to proactively shape internal priorities Awareness of the institutional impact of information as a management tool Operating at the articulation points of the executive with the deliberative Growing authority of professional services linked to role accretion *New Collegiality* between academic and professional services managers **Research Question 1** *How are the role and boundaries of professional services managers changing their relationships with academic staff?*	Managing the centralisation of decision making while structure decentralises Faculty/College tier reducing number of contacts, but increasing accountability Managing via organisational structure or function as necessary to achieve aims Professionalisation of departmental administration by central managers Differential centre/department growth in authority of professional services **Research Question 2** *What are the effects of centralisation or decentralisation of organisational structure on how professional services managers carry out their role?*
What are the changes taking place in Decision Making by Professional Services Managers?	Interpretation of key information increases authority in decision making Transparent decision making with increased accountability Role accretion used to evaluate the impact of decision making Creation of implementation frameworks for institutional decisions Individuals replacing committees for some institutional decisions **Research Question 3** *How is decision making changing in terms of information gathering, selection between alternative options and implementation of decisions?*	Notionally decentralising structure whilst centralising decision making Establishment of senior administrative posts in faculties/colleges Professional services knowledge in one area shaping decisions in other areas Shifts in authoritative decision making towards the centre Increased accountability of academic departments to the centre **Research Question 4** *What are the effects of centralised or devolved organisational structure on the decision making of professional services managers?*

4.6 Wider professionalisation of higher education management

Respondents were asked if they saw professional services managers as a discernable group underpinned by shared values, skills and knowledge. Overall, there was strong identification of these managers as a cognate group, with twenty six respondents recognising an explicit body of skills and expertise. An insight into culture and attitudes was offered in an answer to a question on how the academic community perceives the administrative community. This respondent described a conversation with an external management consultant who was working with the University:

"There are remnants of second class citizenship between academic and administrative staff. We had an away day with a consultant... I was trying to explain to the consultant the behaviour within Universities and he came out with quite a good phrase, he said it's as though academics think there's only one way to be clever. In other words if you're clever enough to be an academic... why wouldn't you be an academic? So they find it really puzzling when they come across clever administrators because they think why would you have chosen to be an administrator if you are clearly clever enough to be an academic."
(Academic Registrar)

Whatever any difference in perspective between groups, there was a strong sense across all staff of the wider values and worth of higher education. Respondents demonstrated a common ethos shared by both academic and administrative staff about the core ethical and professional values embedded within teaching, learning and research. When discussing what makes higher education distinctive, all respondents had a sense of shared ownership with a personal commitment to the ideals of higher education contributing to a social good. The primacy of academic endeavour and individuality of thought was a strong theme, as was the relationship with students, creation of knowledge and the value of academic traditions.

Phrases used were: *"it's an open ended quest to engender excellence in students", "it's about making a difference," "higher education shapes values and impacts on all aspects of life," "we're not widget factories," "the agenda*

we deal with is education which is quite core to society – there's a higher social good".

The similarity of phrases used by both academic and professional services staff was striking, and reflected the strong sense of shared commitment to the principles of higher education as a philosophy common to both groups.

In conclusion, the pattern suggested is of the creation of organisational structures that at a general level appear decentralised, but are actually having a centralising effect on decision making through the intermediate tier acquiring much more authority over departments. Mechanisms that increase departmental accountability to both the faculty and the centre are being put in place by strategic decision makers, through performance management and increased accountability. These organisational changes and decision making behaviours are supported by role changes particularly in the professional services. Senior administrative roles are being established in faculties, and professional services managers are gaining decision making authority through effective implementation of institutional priorities, often using management information as a tool. The professional services are using particular management skills and knowledge to operate cohesively as a body within a situationally contingent framework. One of the primary findings is of an emerging *New Collegiality* in which patterns of decision making behaviour are emerging that combine traditional collegial debate, but on an expanded range of topics, and within new peers groups that are formed to meet changing academic management priorities and purposes. These hypotheses and their implications will be discussed further in the next chapter.

5 Chapter Five - Discussion

5.1 Introduction

"You don't want to knock the stuffing out of academics whose passion is their subject, you want that freedom, and you want that creativity …"
(Academic Registrar)

This principle underpinned the view of all respondents from both academic or administrative backgrounds. With wide ranging perspectives and different roles to fulfil, there is nevertheless a shared ethos of the core value of creative academic activity and its fundamental contribution to the success of the institution. The pattern emerging is of an increasingly complex external environment with growing pressures on the higher education sector to become more accountable. The academic community is not well placed to address these challenges as their primary expertise is in their subject area. Professional services managers provide particular functions that link the external with the internal, including interpretation of management information, future planning and implementation of strategic and operational decisions.

The findings support a concept of an emerging *New Collegiality* that combines traditional collegial debate within new peer groups of academic and professional services managers. Academic managers are also using *New Collegiality* to engage share good management practice with their academic peers, as well as working collaboratively in new organisational combinations to generate innovative synergies within subject disciplines. The findings also suggest organisational structures that appear decentralised at a general level, but are actually centralising decision making through the intermediate tier acquiring much more authority over departments. Alongside structural change, mechanisms that increase departmental accountability are being put in place by the strategic centre, through placing particular requirements on both academic and professional services managers. These organisational changes and decision making behaviours are enabled by developments in the professional services, where staff are gaining decision making authority through effective implementation of institutional priorities, often using

management information as a tool. The body of the professional services is positioned broadly and deeply within higher education institutions, and possesses characteristics and skills that are not found in other areas. Whereas previous studies have explored organisations and decision making more generally, this study contributes to the literature by focusing on the specific interactions between the strategic use of the professional services alongside changes in organisational structure and decision making in higher education institutions. The research also proposes a new concept of a *higher education professional services framework,* with further discussion to suggest three linked levers of management that are used in particular combinations to centralise decision making while decentralising structure. The dynamics resulting from the creation of an intermediate tier, combined with how managers are deployed within the *higher education professional services framework,* using management information to increase accountability, offer new insights into professionalisation, organisational behaviour and decision making.

5.2 Professionalisation and academic change

Much of the literature on professionalisation relates to the ability of professional bodies to accredit and empower their members, using features of professionalisation that usually include the development of a body of knowledge, a shared service ethic, and a standardised skill set that may take several years to acquire (Gornitzka and Larsen 2004; Noordegraaf 2007; Bacon 2009; Deem 2010). The academic community inherently demonstrates such features by creating subject knowledge over extended periods, using particular skills that place research and student learning at the core of scholarly activity. It is arguable that the professional services in higher education have not yet reached this level of professionalisation as a cognate group. Although there are developments that suggest this process is taking place, it has yet to become established to a similar extent as seen within the academic community. For example, a body of knowledge particular to the professional services is being formed and senior professional services staff take many years to acquire their skills, but a wider professionalisation is less overtly recognised. Alongside these attributes, there is also a sense of an

ethical dimension, and how the concept of professionalisism serves the needs and interests of the client first above other priorities. To what extent different elements of a University define themselves in this way is an interesting area, and is discussed later.

Professionalisation of higher education management within institutions needs the right governance structure for that particular institution and the behaviours that accompany that structure. Interpretation of government strategy as a predictive function is generally carried out by senior professional services staff, and is key to well directed institutional strategy and planning. Whereas previously Universities could prosper within a benign and stable climate, the current turbulence within the sector requires institutions to become much more professional in their management. The links between information measurement and performance are growing, and while greater transparency increases accountability when managed actively, this pattern can also augment performance through clarity of expectation. These patterns are able to take place because of improvements in the nature and amount of management information, which enables a type of decision making not previously possible. Two key factors emerge in organisational decision making, firstly organisations become more familiar with certain types of decision making, and secondly they learn to see the decision making process in a particular way.

" .. once you've done it twice or so the authority grows because the institution feels more comfortable with taking a decision by looking at something in a certain way, so there is that change process …"
(Director of Planning)

This is part of the wider professionalisation of higher education management across the sector, because institutions are not simply making decisions with particular outcomes, the decision making process itself is evolving, as institutions become more adept at making decisions with a certain methodology and consistency, and based on explicit evidence.

The professionalisation of academic managers

If Universities have to professionalise, then no group within them is likely to remain completely unaffected by this process. Arguably, departmental staff "at the chalk face" may be less aware of the changes, but Heads of Department will be increasingly affected by the professionalisation of their institutions. Academic managers are under pressure on a number of levels, and there is a growing conflict between maintaining research outputs and managing departments with large budgets and staffing bases. Professional services managers recognise the particular challenges faced by academic managers, are highly sympathetic towards this dichotomy and wish to support academic staff in addressing the management elements of their role. There is a shared sense that the promotion of academic staff based on research merit and subject expertise is no longer sufficient to prepare them for the rigours of managing a department within the present context. The management expertise of professional services managers is recognised in the literature (Kogan 2000; Deem 2004; Shattock 2006; Bacon 2009), and generally there is a positive relationship between academic and professional services managers, particularly at senior levels of the institution (Gornall 1999; Deem and Johnson 2000; Deem 2006).

An increased alignment is emerging between academic and professional services managers as in many instances they are required to perform related, although different, roles. Where academic managers are managerially , they are similar in their approach to professional services managers. However they operate against different performance criteria where roles and expectations may not be clearly defined for academic staff, and within a different cultural environment compared to the professional services. Academic activity is creative and discursive which reflects a culture of individualism and autonomy of ideas. Academic staff are taught to be critical of arguments and rationales as a core skill to their role, so it is unsurprising that occasionally they will apply these skills to be critical of their own managers and institutions. They may well need convincing on the merits of senior management decisions. This can pose particular challenges for academic managers that professional services managers do not necessarily

have to face, and which have implications for the professionalisation agenda. Professional services managers operate to similar targets, within a generally clear hierarchy, they have the same type of service delivery and so can speak with one voice, which can make professionalisation more straightforward. The professionalisation of academic Heads of Department will become more important in an environment where resources are short, and they will be required to develop managerial skills. By using *New Collegiality* to work collaboratively with professional services managers, Heads of Department begin to plan ahead more strategically, and over longer timescales. This is partially due to better quality information, but also to a developing skill set within department heads coupled with a growing appreciation that information management is an essential activity for them to undertake. Being able to manage information and use it to plan ahead for departments in particular was identified as a key benefit. There is generally an established planning function at institutional level, but this is often less evident at departmental level, so the improvements to planning and forecasting were considered to be significant by respondents in both groups:

"So within a faculty they're now very clear about the faculty finances, the strengths and weaknesses. Whereas I think a Head of Department would've still been able to do an okay job as a Head of Department if they weren't really very aware of those things because a Head of Department job is about managing the day-to-day detail of the department not really about forward planning and budget planning and thinking about what are the real strengths and weaknesses within the department. And now we've got a much clearer emphasis on those important strategic things. So I think we are getting better decision making."
(Director of Planning)

In this climate, it is difficult to see how the rotational element of academic managers can be sustained, given the increased management expectations of their roles. It is argued in the literature that decision making has to be highly collegial otherwise individuals cannot return to the faculty when their tenure is over (Rowland 2002; Rowley and Sherman 2003), and the problems this can pose is evidenced (Shattock 2003, Deem 2004). Where the role is

rotational, there are indications that institutions have recognised the need for a longer duration, and encouraged a second term in office. However, while a six year term may be preferable to a three year term, it is still likely to have less impact than if the role is permanent and fully supported by staff development and professional recognition by the academic community. A common view amongst Heads of Department was that the ability to control events was strictly time limited and decisions taken in the present might not be continued into the future:

"I don't expect that a Professional Manager would want to take decisions where he or she was out of line with colleagues … its not so much that we go back to being members of Department and therefore feel that somebody who took over as Head would take pleasure in the reversal of roles, I think its rather that you know that your ability to control events is only going to last three years and if you want to look further ahead, then you're going to have to think, is this a sensible direction which somebody else could carry forward. And would want to carry forward, so its, I think its strategic decision making." (Head of Department)

An interesting point for discussion of the professionalisation of academic managers is the establishment of posts that are "themed" at an institutional level. This is not surprising in Pro Vice Chancellor roles that generally operate with an institutional level brief, but it is perhaps significant to see this approach for Deans, whose role is far more faculty . A trend to give Deans institutional responsibility for particular themes, for example internationalisation across all faculties, brings a number of benefits in terms of the balance between faculty and institution. It can be seen as an indicator that institutional level decision making is being approached more strategically, and balancing central and local needs. The role of Deans is one of the critical roles in the institution (Shattock 2003; Taylor 2006), and they face particular challenges in the management of staff because of cultural expectations that they are part of the scholarly community and that is where their "primary" loyalty should lie. This can be more difficult when they are then expected to deliver a managerial agenda on behalf of the institution, which may conflict

with faculty priorities. This challenge was recognised by professional services managers:

"I suppose there is a continuum isn't there? I think that they are part way towards being seen as being part of central University management but they're very much of the faculty and of the department so they have certain roles and responsibilities and tasks but they are delivering those as an academic rather than as an administrator. I think there is that kind of, subtle cultural expectation."
(Academic Registrar)

Deans are tasked with managing a particular body of staff and disciplinary based culture, with the added complexity of having a pivotal role in delivering the strategic institutional agenda to the faculty and its departments alongside simultaneous representation back to the centre. This was contrasted with the cultural and other expectations of professional services managers, who are seen primarily as representatives of the centre so do not have the same locational challenges. Furthermore, professional services managers can allow themselves to be more managerial because this is expected of them culturally, and they are able to use this to be effective:

"And I think if a Dean was to approach certain issues in the way I approach them they probably wouldn't get away with it. Because there is that sense that a Dean is supposed to be one of them and not supposed to talk like one of the others if you see what I mean …"
(Director of Planning)

It is essential for a Dean to be part of the central decision making process for both the interests of the faculty and the centre, if the centre does not include its Deans, it will very quickly become detached from the academic activity in the departments. Strong relationships between academic managers such as Pro Vice Chancellors and Deans will augment professionalisation of institutional management, as will sound relationships between these groups and the professional services. It can be argued that the primary focus of academic managers has to be the disciplinary base within which they work, so that it can flourish. Alongside this core value set, professionalisation of

academic managers is based on an increasingly shared agenda for delivering institutional success, an appreciation of the value and the limitations of management information, and an effective utilisation of other parts of the institution to support this primary academic activity.

The professionalisation of the professional services

The professional services in higher education are demonstrating clear signs of professionalising as a unified body, with features such as increasingly qualified staff, with a growing number of professional services staff who have Doctorate and Master's qualifications (Bassnett 2005). The development of associations such as the Academic Registrar's Council (ARC) and the Association of University Administrators (AUA) reflect this trend. The AUA is the largest association for the professional services in the higher education sector, and is demonstrating features of professionalisation such as the development of a Code of Standards that promotes an "integrated set" of core values and characteristics. The association also publishes a quarterly journal, forming a continuous professional development framework, and establishing recognised qualifications that reflect a developing body of knowledge. Such professionalisation is well documented in the administrative practitioner literature (Gornall 1999; Conway 2000; Dobson 2000; Lauwerys 2002, 2008; Bacon 2009; Deem 2010).

If it is proposed that there is a greater need for executive decision making in a turbulent environment, because decisions needs to be made quickly and responsively, the counter view is that the loss of collegial decision making removes crucial strengths such as a diversity of view or plurality of argument, which are a fundamental part of the University ethos. An impact of management information is that it shapes decision making for two reasons. Firstly, there may be increased confidence in the decisions themselves because they are evidence based, but this is only a partial solution, and depends on sensible interpretation and application. Secondly, appropriate information enables sector benchmarking in a range of areas, such as competitor sets, student tracking through programmes, National Student Survey, and other measures. The intention of government and funding

bodies to build in greater use of management information into quality assurance assessments and other nationally publicised judgements will accelerate this process. However, while there are national requirements for this information, its relevance to teaching and research in practical terms can be questioned on a number of levels.

The professionalisation of departmental administration will gain in significance in order to deliver institutional objectives, particularly during times of increasingly tight resources. The findings of the study demonstrate an increase in authority of professional services managers based at the centre, with a mixed pattern of growing authority at faculty/college level, and least evidence of this at departmental level. While this might not be surprising given the relative seniority of professional services roles at the centre compared to the departments, the professionalisation of a service has wider dimensions than role seniority. The establishment of a faculty or college allows the creation of senior professional services posts away from the centre, and there is an effect of moving the professionalisation of the service outwards. This takes the form of softening or realigning links with department structures and academic staff, moving line management from Heads of Department to Faculty/College Registrars or other administrators, and placing administrators in teams with other administrative staff, often co-locating them with other administrators rather than within the department. These changes can be contentious with departmental academic and administrative staff alike, where often the status quo is preferred by both groups.

The arguments put forward by central and intermediate tier administrators are that there is a shift of focus from supporting academic activity through direct links with academic staff, to supporting the same academic activity through a distinctly separate but effective professional service. Professional services managers argue that this encourages the sharing of good practice between administrators, providing opportunities for career progression, through role regrading or through formalised systems of staff development as these staff are brought more into the *higher education professional services framework*. Effective support is achieved through the added value of professionalisation alongside good relationships, rather than based on good relationships alone.

These are measurable outcomes, but there are also more subtle dynamics of the influence of senior role models such as Faculty/College Registrars, and the perception of departmental staff both about themselves, what they represent professionally, and what they can aspire to be in terms of career development, should they wish. This will contribute implicitly to the wider professionalisation agenda.

Line management of professional services staff is a key factor in the wider professionalisation agenda. Heads of Department wish to line manage departmental administrators because they recognise that the loss of this link might have an impact on their departmental autonomy. Registrars wish to line manage departmental administrators as they see this as key to promulgating the professionalisation of a service from the centre into departments. Departmental administrators may well have an initial scepticism of proposed changes set by the centre, but once such staff are part of the *higher education professional services framework*, opportunities for wider professional peer development can be created. Such line management changes can strengthen many aspects of departmental administration, but they can also create barriers to local practice and links with staff, and so they need to be carefully considered in terms of potential disadvantages as well as notional advantages.

Another role that is key in line management terms is the Faculty/College Registrar. This varies from clearly defined reporting to Academic Registrars, or “dotted line” arrangements to the centre with direct line management to a Dean or Head of College. Deans and Heads of College generally wish to retain management of the Faculty/College Registrars, and Academic Registrars generally perceive that these reporting links are key to professionalising administration in the faculties and departments, and should lie with senior professional services managers. Without line management, delivery of a particular agenda is based on influence and persuasion, and while these can be powerful forces, once situations become contentious it becomes very difficult for the centre to promote its plans without clear agreement on staff responsibility and accountability.

Changing patterns of decision making and developing skills can demonstrate a professionalising process at one level, however there are wider ethical factors that should be considered to fully understand the dynamics of the current higher education professionalisation context. At the core of professionalism is the notion of serving others to protect the interests of clients, a sense of common good and an altruistic ideology. Principles of academic freedom in the creation of knowledge, the allegiance to expanding the boundaries of a subject area and the interests of students may be elements of how the academic community defines its own sense of professionalism.

It can be argued that professionalism and the professionalisation process are distinct entities from managerialism. Perhaps the fundamental difference is an ethical sense of service to the client with the "social value" of higher education at the core of professionalism. This is arguably less of a feature of mangerialism, which adopts a stance driven by different priorities that do not have a similar ethical focus. Other contrasts are that managerialism tends to be led by the centre in a "top down" approach, so it can feel imposed on staff and can therefore potentially be seen as external directive. This view can be compounded by the target setting and use of management information to measure performance, which comprises a key part of managerialism. This can create less self regulation by staff because they are regulated and measured in other ways by the centre. This contrasts strongly with the innate self regulation of professionalism, supported by an internal commitment to the notion of what it is to be a professional and the ethical obligations to be upheld. In terms of the professionalisation of higher education, Universities may well achieve more by focusing on professionalisation rather than managerialism, as a way of gaining the support of both their academic and their professional services communities. With its greater focus on executive rather than academic business, it appears there is a greater danger that managerialism is more likely to lose sight of academic activity than a professionalisation process, which acknowledges the value of the academic endeavour. *New Collegiality* as a concept has a much greater alignment with professionalism rather than managerialism, because of the strong sense of shared purpose and ethos inherent in *New Collegiality*. Managerialism could

potentially damage this collegial approach because it uses externally measured and directive drivers as an underpinning structure rather than the innate collaborative principles of collegiality.

How the professional services might define its emerging professionalisation, whether similarities with the academic community exist, and what the implications might be, will contribute to wider observations drawn from the study. There appears to be a growing managerial alignment between academic and professional services managers, which demonstrates particular features of collegiality that are traditional in their principles, but applied in a new approach.

A "New Collegiality"?

The professionalising changes for academic and professional services managers have been discussed, and evaluated in terms of their similarities and differences. There is evidence of emerging behaviour and decision making among academic and professional services managers that the study has identified as a *New Collegiality.* This concept is resonant with both established thinking and new perspectives because *New Collegiality* demonstrates many of the features and strengths of traditional collegial type decision making, yet it is increasingly emerging in new areas of debate, and decisions are reached using new peer groups and perspectives. The concept takes three forms:

Firstly, academic managers are using *New Collegiality* to engage in traditional collegial debate with their peers, but in new areas that are outside subject disciplines, such as the strategic use of management information for longer term departmental target setting or resource management. This debate takes place in committees or groups that are not part of the Senate or Academic Board structure, as they have been established to support wider corporate business, rather than with an academic governance focus.

Secondly, academic Heads of Department are working collaboratively within their subject disciplines as part of developing academic groups within new

structures of a college or faculty, rather than traditionally working as separate departments. Organisational changes have brought together academic staff who would not otherwise have come into such close professional contact with each other, and this creates new synergies and dynamics. These academic managers are developing new ways of collaborative working for the benefit of their departments, by working through newly formed organisational structures

Thirdly, professional services and academic managers who act as peers and together demonstrate a *New Collegiality* both as individuals and groups, to discuss matters of management that can be related to subject disciplines or of a wider institutional nature. There is evidence that academic managers themselves are becoming increasingly aware of their own need to professionalise, and they are actively seeking to use *New Collegiality* as a way to broaden their remit beyond their subject discipline. This involves using the peer group working normally associated with academic subject disciplines, to develop more executive and managerial decision making skills. Academic Heads of Department and their professional services counterparts become increasingly aligned by developing a mutually supportive skill set, with similar management expectations and shared understanding of priorities.

It is possible that the greater merging of managerial approaches within the academic and professional services spheres will contribute to the overall professionalisation agenda for the institution, because there is a complementary drive in a similar direction rather than a disparate momentum. Greater alignment of academic and professional services managers is already in evidence at strategic levels of institutions (Deem and Johnson 2000), where managers may well have more in common with their senior colleagues as part of a shared managerial perspective regardless of academic or administrative background (Kogan 2000; Bassnett 2004; Whitchurch 2006, 2008b, 2009). The notion of *New Collegiality* builds on this to suggest that this originally centrally based dynamic is now taking on a much more embedded form of decision making, but is also spread far more widely across all levels and areas of the institution.

Given that aspects of this thesis build on the idea of hybrid professionals working within a third space domain, it will also be useful to briefly consider *New Collegiality* in relation to third space theory. Primary propositions of third space theory are that a new domain lies between academic and administrative domains, and it is populated by hybrid professionals who proactively interpret their roles to cross boundaries. The current discussion supports the concept of the third space, and suggests that the notion of a *higher education professional services framework* builds on principles of third space way of working, as it is a contingently flexible, context specific framework. Extending the discussion further, an interesting concept is whether the features of *New Collegiality* resonate with those of the third space. Third space theory is organised around two main principles of identity and boundaries, which can be used to evaluate an emerging *New Collegiality* against third space theory.

In terms of identity, third space describes hybrid professionals who perceive themselves as belonging to more than one community, and use approaches that draw strength from being outside interest groups as well as within them. This creates an identity that is increasingly fluid and blurred, with roles that have affinities across a broad range of areas within a University, enabling boundary spanning and lateral cross functional working. A similarity with *New Collegiality* is the sense of moving across boundaries to work flexibly outside organisational structures as well as within them, as well as a collegial way of decision making that crosses academic and administrative boundaries. This is reflected in *New Collegiality* by academic staff brought together by commonality of purpose by newly formed groups within recently developed faculties or colleges, and by academic and professional services staff who work collegially together as peers. A difference between third space and *New Collegiality* is that whereas identity is a key theme of third space theory, it is less of a determinant within *New Collegiality*, where the focus is on the decision making process itself in terms of options or implementation, rather than the sense of identity of the individuals or group involved in the decision.
The concept of *New Collegiality* succinctly expresses emergent behaviour that may well merit further research to understand more of the changes, and

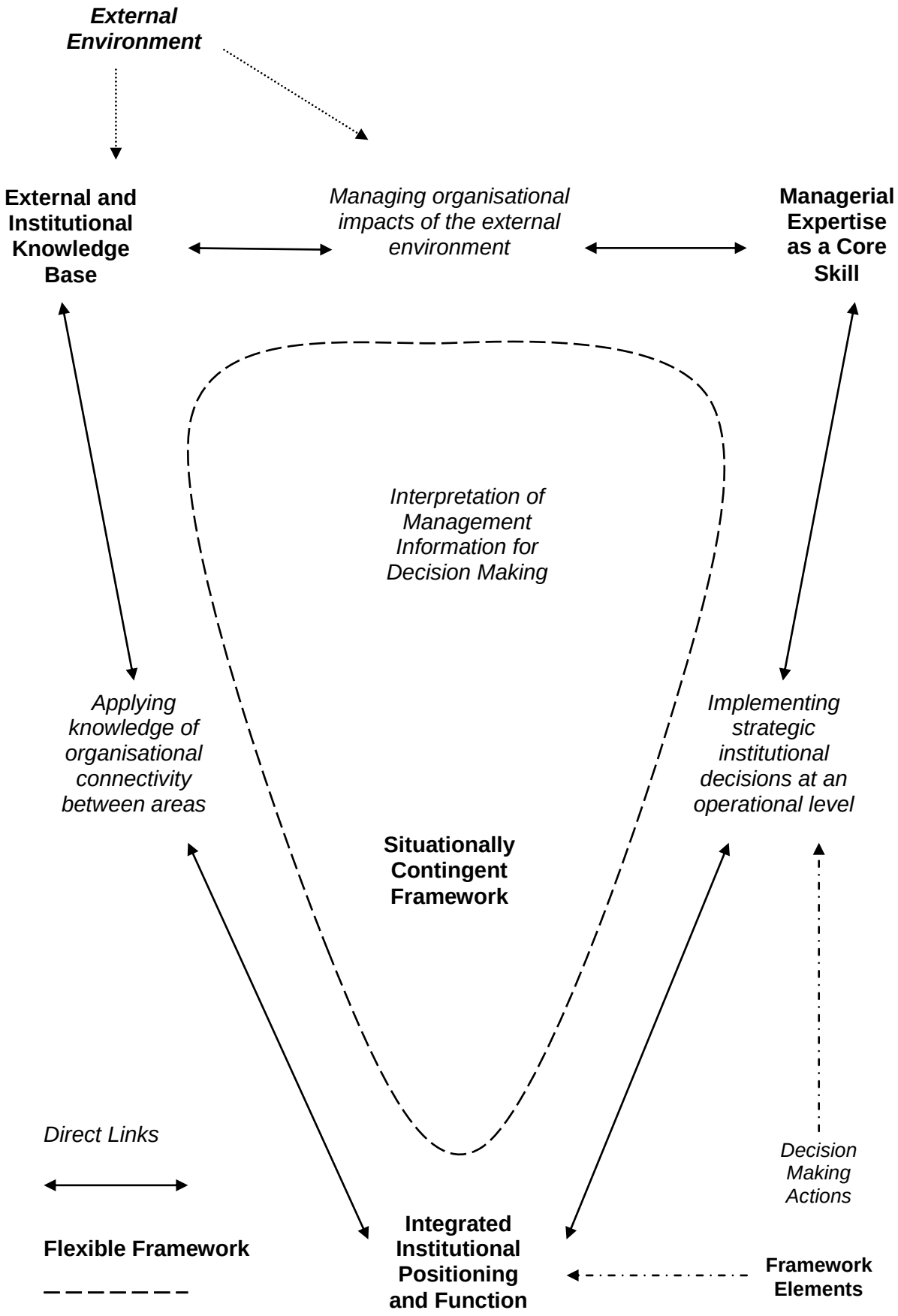
then evaluate their impact on Universities alongside potential implications for the wider sector.

5.3 *The higher education professional services framework*

While the primary focus of the academic community is to undertake research and teaching, the core business of the professional services is to provide an institutional framework that is cognisant of the external environment, so it can support academic activity in the most effective way. A fundamental part of *New Collegiality* is how it forms new networks that can be both formal and informal. The additional synergy that frameworks and networks can bring is recognised in the literature (Weick 1976; Liebeskind, Oliver et al. 1996; Chapman 2001). This study puts forward a concept of a *professional services framework* within higher education, which is based on three key elements of knowledge base, core managerial skills and institutional positioning that come together in a specific and mutually supportive combination. The framework is situationally contingent and will align as necessary depending on the issues being addressed. The decision making links between the elements are direct and always present to varying degrees depending on what is being managed.

The concept is represented diagrammatically overleaf.

Diagram 5 ***The Higher Education Professional Services Framework***



An external and institutional knowledge base

Universities have a range of staff with particular knowledge and skills, and an academic community with highly specialised subject expertise. There are particular aspects of the external and institutional knowledge base of the professional services that combine with core managerial skills and integrated institutional positioning and function, to come together in a situationally contingent framework. The emergence of a knowledge base of the professional services is documented in the administrator practitioner literature (Gornall 1999; Conway 2000; Lauwerys 2008; Bacon 2009). This knowledge stretches across disciplines and has an institutional focus so that it becomes essential to interpret the external environment affecting the higher education sector, combined with an ability for translation into the internal impact on the institution (Whitchurch 2006). This knowledge of national policy developments and government requirements through Funding Councils, quality assurance agencies and other national bodies inevitably shapes institutional priorities (Whitchurch 2007). Professional services managers are particularly well placed to manage this because they interpret knowledge across subject disciplines, with an understanding of organisational connectivity to equip them to evaluate the implications of external and internal factors, and levels of institutional risk. A fundamental requirement of their roles is to implement decisions that enable the organisation to act as a corporate body that is responsive to differing subject specialties, but is not driven by various disciplinary agendas.

This policy and strategy knowledge contributes to a bigger picture of management information, and complements internal data for financial and corporate planning. This combination of institutional knowledge combined with external analysis is augmented by growing networks of professional services managers. Deem identifies the growing “social capital” of professional services administrators which is developing within and beyond their institutions, which has hitherto been primarily associated with academic staff (Deem 2010). This is arguably another indication of professionalisation. The increasingly influential knowledge base and the growing authority of professional services managers is shaping relationships within this context of

wider professionalisation. This is identified in the higher education management literature (Rhoades and Sporn 2002; Gornitzka and Larsen 2004; Taylor 2007), and is also reflected in Whitchurch's concept of the third space (Whitchurch 2008 a-c). This study supports Whitchurch's findings, noting similar features of hybrid professionals working in the third space where managers are developing an identity that interprets their role more proactively, operating effectively within and between blurred boundaries (Whitchurch 2008c). This study has also identified ideas that are not covered in the current literature, in recognising the systems effect resulting from the synergies of a knowledge base that is applied with managerial skill. These characteristics contribute to a situationally contingent framework that adapts as necessary to meet a given situation. The *higher education professional services framework* does not challenge third space activity, rather it affirms the concept. The framework is applied as necessary as professional services managers use managerial skills to operate flexibly.

Managerial skills as core to professional services roles

The findings have indicated that the management expertise of the professional services is acknowledged (Kogan 2000; Shattock 2003; Deem 2004; Bacon 2009). Professional services managers value their ability to manage as a core part of their role, and this is seen as a career choice. The contribution to the organisation of these particular skills appears to be explicitly recognised by an established pattern of role accretion, where additional responsibilities are given to existing roles to increase their authority. This is particularly noticeable for Academic Registrars, and to some degree for Directors of Planning, and is evidenced in both executive and academic areas. An understanding of the implications of the external environment, combined with organisational knowledge and an ability to interpret management information, gives this particular role great formal and informal influence when also aligned with constitutional authority.

An interesting consequence of the growing ability to interpret and shape decision making is the much greater integration of key information streams that increase effective management. Directors of Planning use management

information and the direction of resource and student number planning as ways to exert influence. These managers are usually located within the corporate and executive functions of the organisation. A trend is developing whereby these roles are becoming more involved in academic quality matters through programme approval and portfolio development, and in conjunction with this Heads of Quality are increasingly using management information linked to quality assurance and enhancement. This merging is significant because it enables very precise planning of the portfolio and organisational structure by the centre, and a closer match of academic teaching with organisational resources. This leads to an ability to take executive management decisions that map closely to academic activity, increasing the likelihood of a tighter business model that is more closely aligned to the institutional mission. Furthermore, this increases institutional influence by the centre and challenges subject specialists within the departments. Professional services managers have a key role in defining such terms of reference, which increases their authority and influence particularly when resources are constrained. The use of management information to inform academic decision making is likely to increase during times of financial constraints, and the professional services will have an growing role to balance resources equitably between subject areas on behalf of the institution. Furthermore, this form of decision making increases control by the centre through academic rather than executive strands, and this can be used as a less managerial form of steerage.

Institutional positioning and function of the professional services

One of the primary aspects of the professional services is their permeation and positioning throughout the institution, irrespective of subject discipline. This can explain why the *higher education professional services framework* is a useful notion to describe a singular body, working in adapted forms from area to area, that acts as an integrated structure to support varied and discrete activity across the organisation. A key strength is the context specific responsiveness and the situationally contingent flexibility of this framework.

Senior professional services managers demonstrate an ability to move from managing through structure to managing through function. This is useful in overcoming organisational obstacles, and in implementing strategic decision making at a local level in the academic departments. The literature notes that professional services managers manage the work of academic staff as well as managing the staff who deliver key services alongside academic staff (Deem 2004), with a recognition of the importance of the department as the core unit within higher education institutions (Becher and Kogan 1992; Clark 1998; Dearlove 1998; Middlehurst 2004; Shattock 2006). The evidence in the literature was confirmed by this study. There is recognition and reflection on the contrasting identities of academic and administrative staff, with the former having the greatest affinity to the subject and the latter having a more distinct sense of loyalty to the organisation (Rhoades and Sporn 2002; Deem 2004; Henkel 2005; Delanty 2007; Bacon 2009).

The institutional positioning of the professional services enables operational activity in terms of both breadth and depth, which offers a particular function to the institution. Breadth comes from the cross disciplinary nature of the work so that the sciences, arts, humanities and other subjects, whilst having strong disciplinary distinctions from each other still require generic support from administrative staff. Depth is achieved by the distribution of professional services staff from the most strategic levels of the University to student facing programme support. This matrix of operational spread and through a number of layers enables the organisation to use this framework to take forward and to implement strategic decisions on the ground. The importance of the synergies of knowledge across different organisational areas is discussed by McNay in his organisational model of a University (McNay 1995), and is then revisited by Whitchurch to set these principles in a more contemporary context (Whitchurch 2004). What both authors point to is how knowledge across different areas creates insight into interrelated outcomes, so the impact of decisions in one area can be anticipated in others. Anticipation of these implications can shape decision making. When this is combined with a corporate sense of belonging to the organisation, usually quite strong in the professional services, this provides a significant force for institutional planning. The ability to support the delivery of institutional projects comes

about because the professional services function operates as part of a cohesive framework. This is strengthened by being located at the articulation between the executive and the academic business of the institution, which has a decisive steer on the implementation of institutional initiatives. The executive strand cannot deliver without involving the academic strand of the institution, because all key institutional priorities and corporate decision making will link to academic activity as the core business of a University. Such academic energy needs support to enable it to flourish within a wider institutional context, and appropriate links with the professional services and their organisational and executive knowledge can assist this.

Third space and the Higher Education Professional Services Framework

Whitchurch has put forward a significant body of evidence to suggest influential changes in the roles and identities of professional services staff (Whitchurch 2004, 2006, 2007), and in particular the development of Bounded, Cross Boundary, Unbounded and Blended professionals. These professionals proactively interpret hybrid roles, and work within an emerging third space as a new domain lying between academic and administrative domains (2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2009). The current discussion supports rather than contradict Whitchurch's arguments, and the concept and characteristics of the third space still hold true. Indeed, it might be argued that given it is a contingently flexible, context specific framework within the professional services, the notion of a *higher education professional services framework* reinforces the legacy of the third space way of working,

These ideas are developed further by suggesting that the *higher education professional services framework* is located broadly within and alongside third space activity and is used as necessary by professional services managers. The operation of this framework is mutually supportive of the proactive interpretation of roles and shifting boundaries that characterise third space activity. The framework is not a rigid structure, as the three features of knowledge base, managerial skills and institutional positioning, will align differently in a situationally contingent structure according to a given context. All three elements are relevant, although one area may take precedence over

another depending on the decision to be made. Alignment between third space activity and the *higher education professional services framework* is supported because the activities described within the framework of managing the organisational impact of the external environment, using knowledge of organisational connectivity and implementing strategic decisions at an operational level are all activities that also take place within the third space. The hybrid professional operating in the third space will use the *higher education professional services framework* as deemed necessary. This is perhaps resonant with Whitchurch's concept of the "blended professional" (Whitchurch 2009), as managers who capitalise on a sense of belonging or not belonging entirely to either professional services or academic domains. These managers are well placed to decide how to use the *higher education professional services framework* most effectively for any given situation.

This relationship can be represented diagrammatically using a modified version of Whitchurch's analysis of the third space (Whitchurch 2008a), as also represented in the literature review (Chapter 2, Diagram 1, page 31). The framework is now set alongside this to demonstrate both similarities and differences between the theories. In this way, the two concepts of third space and the *higher education professional services framework* can be shown to exist together and offer different but complementary approaches to dealing with organisational complexity and decision making.

Diagram 6 The Relationship between the *Higher Education Professional Services Framework* and Roles and Functions in the Third Space

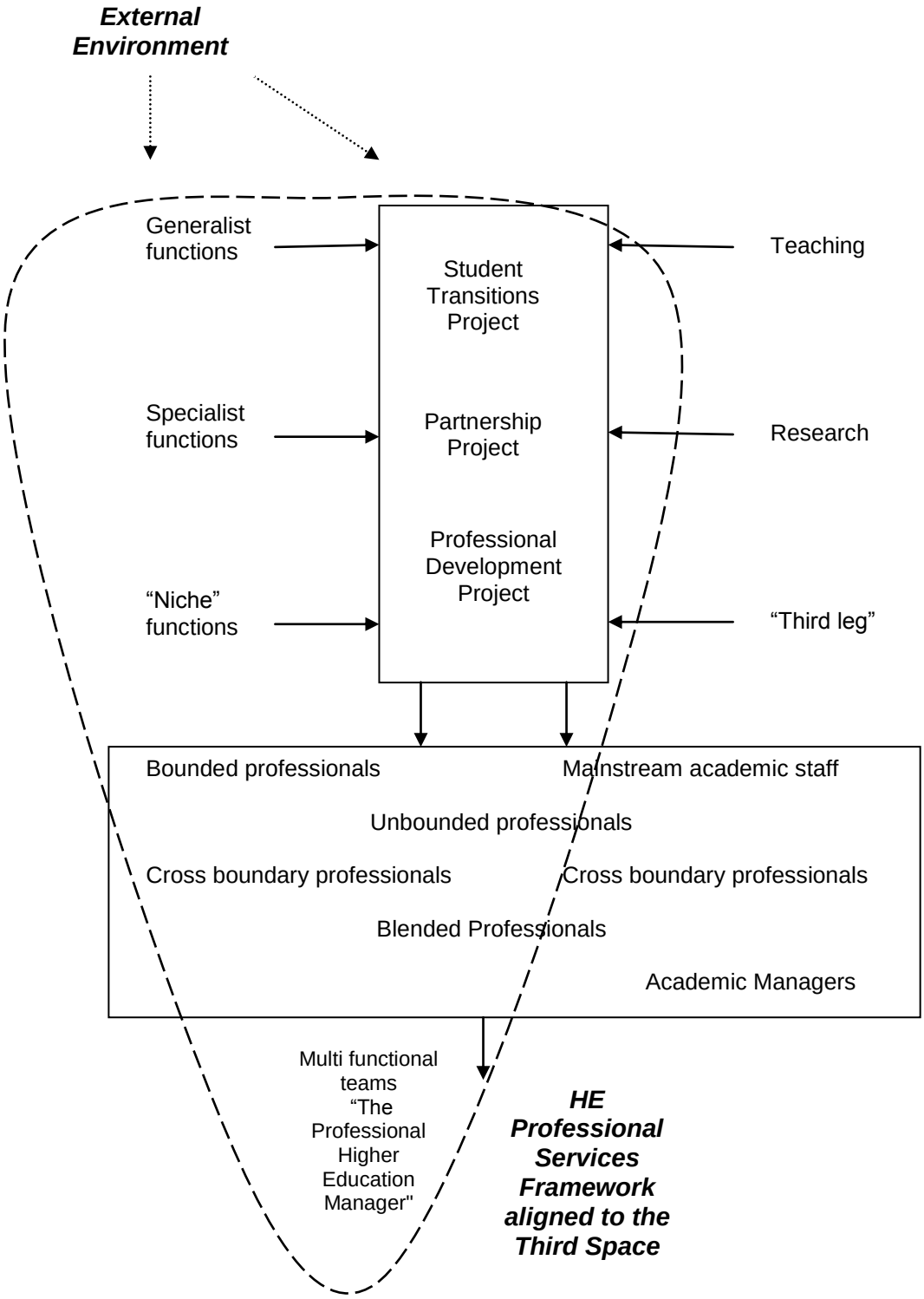


Diagram of Third Space Professionals in UK Higher Education adapted from Whitchurch 2008a, page 385

5.4 Shifts in Decision Making Authority and Organisational Structure

The institutions demonstrated a pattern of notionally decentralising authority through organisational structure but in reality centralising control. Creation of faculties/colleges can appear to move organisational authority outwards from the centre, but this intermediate tier also creates parallel shifts of decision making authority inwards from departments to faculties, and creates institutional levers for making the departments and faculties more accountable. This occurs through the deployment of key academic and professional services staff and the application of layers of management information by the strategic centre in a particular way.

Dynamics between organisational structure and decision making

University structures are affected by a number of factors such as age, disciplinary mix, location and size. Recent organisational changes have been dominated by financial and resource pressures, and such decisions are rarely driven by educational ideas (Shattock 2003). Smaller institutions rely much more on informal decision making (McNay 2002), and a number of organisational models can exist to achieve similar aims (Taylor 2006). It becomes clear that there is no superior organisational form, rather that a contingency model applies so that the organisational structure adopted is appropriate for the particular set of circumstances that the institution finds itself in. This will naturally affect the framing of organisational decision making, which will then shape decision outcomes (Rowley and Sherman 2003; McKenna and Martin-Smith 2005; Nutt 2006). Overall, in spite of institutional discussion around decentralisation of organisational structure, there is evidence that decision making authority is shifting towards the centre. This study argues that the dynamics can be expressed in terms of three fundamental levers of management that are linked together and used by the strategic centre.

In the context of this discussion, these three linked levers of management relate to organisational structure, decision making, and the professional services. The first lever of management is the creation of the intermediate tier (organisational structure), the second lever of management is the

interpretation and evidential use of management information in specific ways to direct and measure performance (decision making), and the third is the use of the professional services to enable institutional overview and support of the departments (*higher education professional services framework*). They do not operate in isolation, and key to understanding their effect is to appreciate the synergies between them, and how each lever reinforces the effects of the other two, so their strength and impact comes from this interactive outcome. Central to this dynamic is an appreciation that the linked levers of management will only be successful when the strategic centre uses them with great care and balance.

Lever 1 The intermediate tier such as a faculty or college creates fewer, larger units for the centre to manage, these larger units can also be held more accountable than many smaller units. Accountability can be structured so that it is aggregated at faculty level or disaggregated to department level, so faculties/colleges are themselves accountable, but also departments are accountable through them. The overall effect suggested by this study is that the intermediate tier moves central scrutiny closer to departments, and simultaneously moves decision making authority from the department to the faculty or college. This results in a reduction of departmental autonomy that is not always immediately apparent to the departments themselves. Professional Services Managers were acutely aware of this outcome, and the wider effects of creating an intermediate tier:

"… effectively what we're seeing is an erosion of Departmental autonomy, gradually. But also its making departments much more accountable for what they do, so longer term we see the faculty as being the base unit that we will have to deal with in the future…"
(Academic Registrar)

There are some benefits such as more effective use of resource to support departmental activity, particularly where a single department could not support a particular resource on its own, but this can be provided through a larger critical mass such as a faculty or college.

There is no ideal model for higher education institutions (Shattock 2003; Taylor 2006), although there may be homogeneity of structure across the sector described as “institutional isomorphism”, where organisations operating in a similar environment will broadly follow a similar structure to adapt to this shared context (Di Maggio and Powell 1983). There is established commentary on simplifying structure from the perspective of the centre (Hogan 2005), and strengthening of the middle layer of institutional management (Brennan and Shah 2000; Rhoades and Sporn 2002), both of which this study has also found to support the existing literature. However, less attention has been paid to the growing role of the professional services in implementing institutional objectives within higher education management, and in a context of increasing professionalisation, this is arguably an important gap in an evaluation of current trends. Overall, providing that there are response mechanisms in place it appears that the intermediate tier brings together organisational structure and decision making in a way that supports the delivery of institutional objectives, rather than impedes them. Where difficulties in institutional implementation arise, this is because there is devolution to the departments without a feedback loop, which limits information returned to the centre which can result in impaired organisational function. The fact that a trend exists to create an intermediate tier suggests that Universities have recognised this, and they perceive a need to centralise decision making.

A direct link between organisational structure and decision making is the emergence of a *New Collegiality* amongst the academic community who are placed together in a faculty or college, where historically they had operated independently. They work together in a way they have not done previously, sharing resources, such as working space or staff, and creating new opportunities in academic collaborations in research or other scholarly and business activity. Significantly, the creation of an intermediate tier also moves the focus of certain decision making away from the departments, where subject expertise predominates, towards more generic issues of finance, value for money and quality. This strengthens the role of the strategic centre, by focusing links on fewer faculties as opposed to many departments, as well

as increasing the influence of professional services managers operating within infrastructure functions rather than subject disciplines.

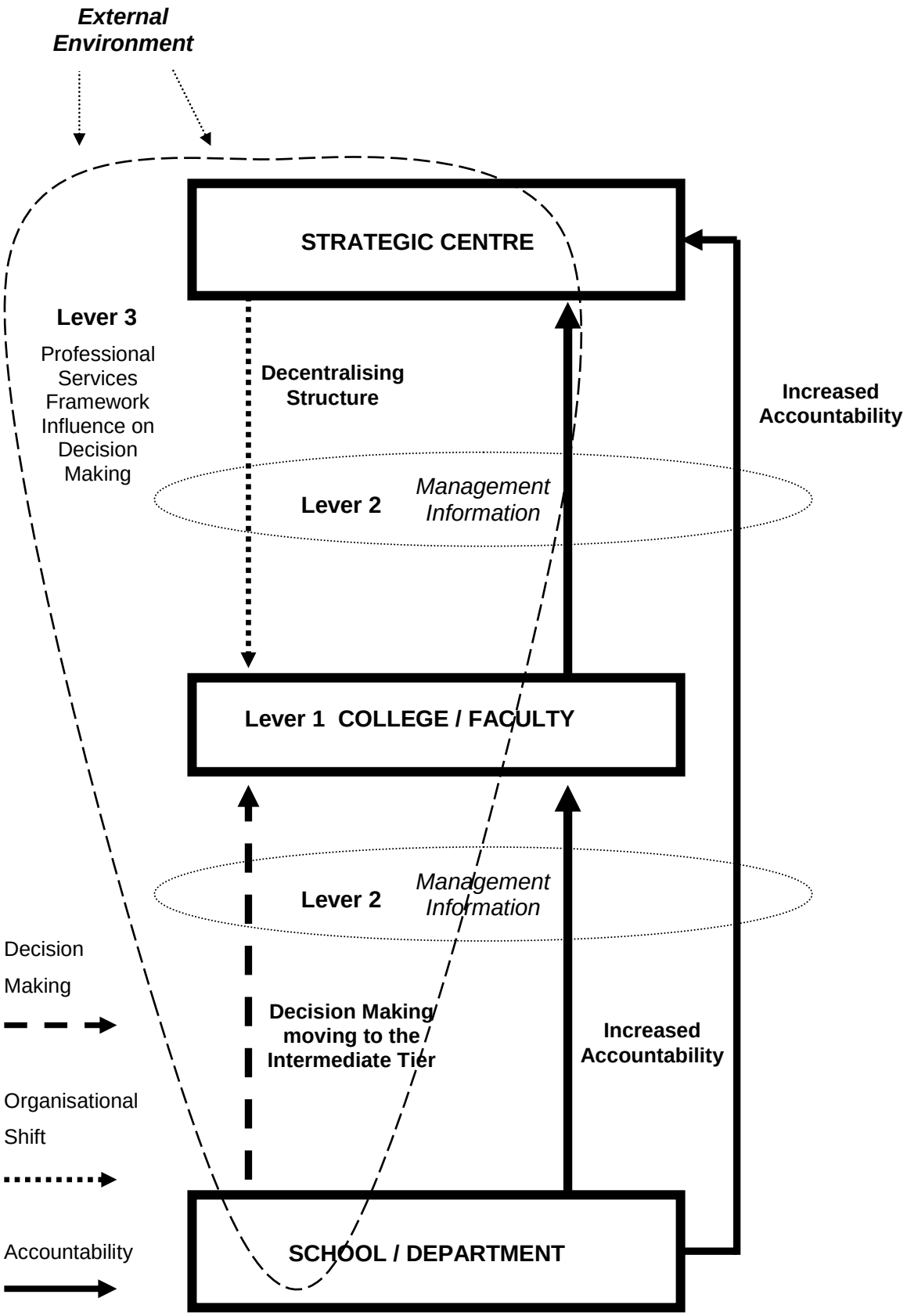
Lever 2 The evidential use of management information directs decision making to try to improve performance, and the organisational outcomes discussed above would not be possible without carefully targeted and accurate management information to support them. Management information in the context of this study is interpreted in a broad sense, that is, all information used for the purposes of institutional planning and management. It includes the numerical and other data that are necessary for financial and corporate planning, but it also includes management information around government strategy and policy developments, and their likely impact on the institution. A synergy with organisational structure is that not only does management information enable the changes to take place, but the information itself becomes more useful as a result of organisational restructuring, so there is a mutually reinforcing effect. For example, financial or other planning can be set at departmental level, but also aggregated to the level of the faculty/college, at which the institutional consequences of decisions are more likely to be apparent. Furthermore, organisational changes result in fewer contacts that are each more meaningful, resulting in potentially more effective and targeted use of resource. Accountability is generally increasing (Hood 1995; Lauwerys 2002; Middlehurst 2004; Yielder and Codling 2004; Deem 2006), and takes a number of forms, but management information is becoming increasingly significant. It might be suggested that information has become more than a tool for interpretation and measurement, and has grown into an instrument used by the organisation to balance nominal devolution of structure outwards with actual retention of decision making authority by the centre. This is a contentious concept, with both negative and positive implications.

Lever 3 ***The higher education professional services framework*** has a particular knowledge base and skill set to support this approach. The interpretive skills of professional services managers become key to institutional planning and forecasting, and these skills are arguably used at another level, for example to justify and validate wider management decisions

taken by the strategic centre. This involves a process of external legitimation that may not fully reflect the internal underlying motivation. As the usefulness of management information grows due to organisational change, the value of professional services managers to the organisation will possibly strengthen as primary interpreters of this increasingly effective evidential tool. The increases in the authority of the professional services are most marked at the centre, and least evident in the departments. This might be expected given the nature and seniority of the roles involved. Establishing faculties/colleges allows senior administrative posts to be created outside the centre, and this can be presented as organisational decentralisation. However, a few senior professional services roles can be held more accountable than many junior posts, and these roles also combine to build a tiered institutional mechanism through which the departments are held more accountable. For example, Faculty and College Registrars can work more closely with departments than centrally based professional services staff, and these roles are themselves accountable to the centre. When these organisational, structural and professional services dynamics are also combined with the use of management information, again the synergy between all three levers is underlined.

The diagram overleaf illustrates three levers of management, and how they are linked. The creation of an intermediate tier is part of a process that indicates a decentralisation of organisational structure, while simultaneously increasing departmental accountability through this intermediate tier. Management information informs decision making and is diffused throughout the organisation between the structural tiers. This is aligned with a *higher education professional services framework* that has a significant input into decision making at a strategic level, tapering off through the intermediate tier and into the departments, which reflects a lower proportional input into departmental decision making by professional services staff working within them.

Diagram 7 Three Linked Levers of Management in Universities



Changes presented as decentralising but in reality centralising also relate to academic manager roles, where Heads of Department have links direct to the Vice Chancellor under a structure without an intermediate tier, and these links are moved out to Pro Vice Chancellors. Such changes are presented as more direct access for Heads of Department, alongside moving authority outwards from the centre. However, in practice Pro Vice Chancellors with an overview of a particular area exert closer management control over departments when compared to a Vice Chancellor with an overview of the entire University. These developments in effect increase accountability of Heads of Department to the strategic centre through academic line management. This is further reinforced if ownership of budgets is also moved away from Heads of Department to Pro Vice Chancellors. Creation of faculties/colleges as large organisational units means that there is a more accurate evaluation of the impact of decisions on the institution as a whole, this is also more likely if these structures are allied with thematic Pro Vice Chancellors and Deans.

All Universities fundamentally depend on the dynamic creativity of their academic communities. Few would dispute that decision making must have sensitivity to the academic performance (Shattock 2003), and must not alienate the academic enterprise (Clark 2004). However this aim is likely to come under growing pressure as the sector addresses increasing regulation and reducing resource, and takes on stronger administrative control (Dearlove 1998; Ramsden 1998; Rhoades and Sporn 2002; Middlehurst 2004). Within the departments it is likely there is a differential understanding of the potential impact of these wider organisational dynamics. Heads of Department may anticipate the trends, but subject specialists on the ground, whose focus and loyalty is on developments in their discipline rather than in their institution (Deem 2004), are far less likely to be aware of how wider organisational changes could affect them. While it can be argued there is a need for increasing central control to achieve institutional responsiveness, key to success will be the careful match of central direction and steerage with departmental autonomy. This need for balance and recognition of academic identity is well documented in the literature (Henkel 2005; Delanty 2007; Taylor 2007; Bacon 2009). However, there is less discussion on how the

professional services operate as an integrated body to enable Universities to achieve these aims. The *higher education professional services framework* provides a structure through which the centre can manage the organisation, and the departments can be supported locally to engage in academic teaching and research. An overly prescriptive central approach to academic governance creates a potential risk when the academic community becomes no longer willing to invest to make such governance work (Shattock 2003). Consequently, management will only be successful if there is recognition of the mutual complementarity of both academic and professional services communities, which will be achieved by recognising both the differences and the similarities between them, and then developing strategies that play to their distinct strengths whilst recognising the primacy of the academic endeavour. These principles contribute to the emergence of a *New Collegiality*.

Taking organisational changes and decision making together, the increase in central control potentially runs a risk of alienating the academic community. From an institutional perspective, the increased accountability is both necessary and inevitable, from a departmental perspective it could demonstrate a lack of trust and prevent academic staff from concentrating on teaching and research. In the same way the strategic centre uses management information to measure and evaluate, it can use this to persuade and convince. There is a need to achieve legitimacy in the eyes of the wider academic community, so the strategic centre will need to convince staff that that they retain subject autonomy, although it will be within a changed context which can provide benefits as well as constraints.

Implications of organisational and decision making shifts

Management decision making and the organisation exist in a mutually reciprocal relationship (Harrison 2000; Chapman 2001; Taylor 2006). The literature describes a steady trend to push the University sector towards a more corporate model, which is reinforced by a much greater concern for accountability (Brennan and Shah 2000; Kogan 2000; Rhoades and Sporn 2002; Yielder and Codling 2004). A number of changes in organisational structure and decision making are a response to demand for a faster reaction

time to external pressures and many institutions will adopt similar organisational structures (Di Maggio and Powell 1983). Devolution of administrative function can affect an institution's responsiveness under pressure, particularly the loss of a strategic capability to produce a quick analysis of institutional positions on key criteria for the decision making process, such as student numbers or institutional level financial forecasts. It can also develop local bastions of self interest that can become significant barriers to change (Shattock 2003, 2006). This broad suggestion that institutions may be moving from heavily devolved to more centralised structures is also noted by Shah and Brennan. They highlight how corporate requirements are presented as matters of academic quality as a tool to effect change (Becher and Kogan 1992; Brennan and Shah 2000; Salter 2002). An interesting point for discussion is that structure is overt and is explicitly represented in organisational charts and strategies. Decision making authority is perhaps more multilayered, it has a similarly overt element through decision making bodies, however there are more subtle strands to decision making because it is subject to multiple formal and informal influences, some of which are not always explicit. In this way, it becomes possible for organisations to centralise decision making function while appearing to decentralise structure. This could result in institutions where the authority formally created by the organisational structure does not match where decision making authority lies in reality, and this can create dysfunctional decision making outcomes.

Devolution to faculties may seem to simplify academic organisation, but it may also make it difficult to raise a University's performance (Shattock 2003), also a loss of organisational control may impede the translation of improvements in one area across to other areas (Robertson 1993). A recurrent theme of the study was that highly devolved institutions can have less confidence in taking forward institutional level projects because of fewer structural links, as well as increased logistical problems in successfully implementing central decisions at a local level. The professional services make key contributions towards the implementation of strategic decisions on the ground, due to a linked structure at all levels of the organisation and by recognising the value of these organisational interconnections. Even in highly devolved structures, there was consistent evidence that the centre retained

control of certain decisions, for example staff recruitment and resources. In many ways, because of the overall shift towards a more corporate model of academic governance, and a shift of power to senior managers (Hood 1995; Dearlove 1998; Ramsden 1998; Kogan 2000; Gornitzka and Larsen 2004; Middlehurst 2004), it can be argued that there is no longer a clear distinction between the executive and academic strands of Universities, and such a distinction becomes increasingly artificial. This may be so, but the effective bridging of the two perspectives is becoming an increasingly influential aspect of current higher education management. There are trends of growing executive drivers, but alongside a recognition that these should not overwhelm the academic sprit. While there was pressure to drive forward institutional requirements, it was also seen as vital that academic individuality and energy were preserved. There is also a sense that this autonomy will not remain untouched by institutional developments, and academic culture may adapt to changing circumstance.

Two views offered by different Directors of Planning highlight the dilemma facing institutions that have to make decisions quickly to adapt to rapidly changing and resource constrained circumstances, and yet do not want to alienate their staff or damage their creative drive:

"I think there are areas where maintaining that sense of independence is about maintaining the thinking time and the heart of what is a good Academic. And I think we're at risk of losing that as we become more business like."
(Director of Planning)

Aligned with this strong sense of the need to preserve the collegial nature of academic decision making, there is the stark reality of a higher education sector that is under immense pressure from government policies, diversified student demand and challenging markets:

"The more you are under pressure to make a decision, the less consultative you have to become. Because otherwise you're just losing valuable time and you just have to ask yourself, do I have the time to debate this for half a year, or do I now have to take the decision because the pressure is on."
(Director of Planning)

An emerging pattern is the increasing use of nominated individuals to take decisions that were once taken by committees, for example on the appointment of examiners. These individuals have explicit individual authority on behalf of the University's Academic Board or Senate, to make decisions on the appointment of examiners. The criteria used will be agreed collegially by committees of the Senate or Academic Board, and then delegated. This has an interesting implication for the principles of the collegium, because it removes this principle one step away from the locus of decision making. Whereas in a committee actual nominations will be discussed and agreed, with this system all that is agreed are the criteria to be used for nomination, and they are applied by appointed individuals without a committee having the opportunity to debate actual nominations. This raises a question about the changing role of the collegium, the increasing use of executive decision making, and how this links with the wider professionalisation of higher education. In terms of organisational and decision making shifts, it is important to acknowledge the collegial approach is at the heart of academic discourse, and its loss would be to the detriment of Universities. Previously, the principles of the collegium have been applied comprehensively to all aspects of the work of Universities, including those areas for which collegial decision making does not work. The way forward may involve an honest evaluation of those aspects where the collegium is less effective, alongside genuine respect for where academic collegial decision making can be left to operate autonomously.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

The study has generated evidence that higher education institutions may have organisational structures that appear decentralised at a broad level, but they are actually centralising decision making through the intermediate tier acquiring much more direct and authority over departments. The argument put forward is that alongside this structural change, mechanisms that increase departmental accountability are being put in place by the strategic centre, and these mechanisms are augmented by parallel developments in the authority of the professional services. Within this overall pattern of centralisation and professionalisation, professional services staff are operating as a body within

a coherent framework, and are gaining authority and influence through interpretation of management information and effective implementation of strategic decision making at an operational level.

The robustness of the study can be challenged in a number of ways. Firstly, consideration of the impact of the theoretical framework on the findings provides an insight into the terms of reference that arise from an interpretation of the current body of knowledge. In particular, the potential to direct attention towards some aspects of the empirical study, while downplaying other elements which another approach may have considered significant. Reference to the research questions is an iterative process and ensures that while the literature is constructive in providing a theoretical framework, it does not prematurely skew answers to potentially limit any findings. The impact the theoretical framework had on the study took a number of forms. An example of where the theoretical framework shaped the study towards particular themes is Whitchurch's work on the third space, which explores the role of identity of both academic and professional services staff as being fundamental to the interpretation of their roles. It is therefore understandable that this study also naturally considered the links between identity and roles when considering the substantive topic, and which was appropriate for the research questions being considered. For example, another body of literature might have resulted in a reduced focus on identity in this study, and perhaps more on leadership. This would have been relevant to the context but it would have inevitably resulted in different findings, creating a much greater emphasis on how strategic leadership might affect professionalisation across an institution. An example of where the theoretical framework shaped the study away from a particular line of enquiry relates to the literature on organisational structure in higher education institutions. The focus of the study was on structure in relation to centralisation and decentralisation.

Although inevitably change is taking place in organisations and is identified when discussing influence and decision making, the study did not review the body of literature on managing the change processes themselves. These were not as pertinent to the research questions which were more about the consequences and outcomes of the changes rather than the method for

achieving them. However, the management of change in higher education organisations could have been another approach, and would have directed attention towards the roles of professional services managers in managing the change process itself. This may have resulted in findings with a much greater emphasis on implementation of decisions, rather than on other areas of decision making.

Alongside the theoretical orientation used, consideration needs to be given to the effects on the findings of the data collection and analysis methods, and any limitations that might arise from these. The sole method for data collection was based on interview questions that mapped back to the research questions drawn from the literature. This could be a limitation as the only method of data collection, and the use of focus groups might have broadened the findings or offered a multiplicity of viewpoints in dynamic interaction with others as part of a group. Another key point in relation to data collection and the use of interviews without additional focus groups is the issue of confidentiality. Much of what respondents discussed was sensitive, they were generally senior staff in their organisations and they could not have been as forthcoming in an open group. Confidential information could have been obtained by the use of anonymous questionnaires, but this would not have had the depth and complexity of interview data.

Care was taken to match the data collection tool to the research questions, however it is worth being aware of potential limitations, as interviews rely solely on the respondents' perceptions, and there is no confirmation that their perceptions match what they actually do. A way to partially address this is the quality of research design and the structure of the interview questions. In terms of design, similar roles in each institution covering the same areas offered cross referencing. In terms of interview questions, semi structured interviews make it possible to gain varied perspectives from different parts of the organisation, so that alternative views on similar topics can be gleaned from a number of angles. This served as an element of cross checking during the study, when respondents from one area independently confirmed the findings in other areas.

Other limitations of the study include its cross-sectional nature, size and specificity, and each of these points will be discussed in turn. The interviews are cross sectional rather than longitudinal, so they represent a particular period in time (November 2009 to March 2010), and may not capture significant changes that would be detected by a longitudinal study conducted over an extended period of time. This is arguably a limitation, however, the research questions do not need to be answered through a longitudinal study, and the interviews were constructed to capture changes that might have taken place up to the point of interview, so evolution over time will have been detected to that point. Overall, it does not appear to be a major limitation, and the constraints of size and specificity are potentially more significant.

In terms of size, it might be argued the study was not large enough as it was based on a sample of six case studies, which is a small proportion of over one hundred and fifty higher education institutions in the UK. This prompts a question of whether the findings based on these six institutions are generalisable to a wider population. The sample was representative of the sector, with five interviews in each of these six institutions, comprising thirty interviews in total, constitutes an arguably sound sample size for a study based on the research questions. However, the potential limitation of number is acknowledged, and will be reflected in the claims made for the research. The same roles in each organisation were interviewed, permitting cross referencing both within and between institutions, which increases the likelihood of propositions that can be generalised. The respondents were able to offer deep and meaningful insight into their organisations. A potential limitation might be if there were particular institutional contexts that might affect findings and generalisability, however, none of the institutions were in this category as they all operated within a broadly similar sphere.

In terms of specificity, while the basis of the research was on the professional services in higher education, care was taken to avoid undue influence from the professional services respondents that could potentially result in an excessive bias towards the professional services. This was achieved by academic representation comprising twenty percent of the total sample, and ensuring the model included input from academic staff within every institution

studied. Also, including roles from different areas of academic governance ensured a spread of outlook across the professional services to avoid polarising or grouping of views. During the data analysis, it was helpful to see that the academic and professional services responses, taken together, provided consistent findings.

Another potential limitation is that professional services departments such as Finance or Human Resources have not been represented, and may have key information to offer in relation to decentralisation of structure alongside centralisation of decision making in matters of finance or recruitment, for example. However, the original research question relates to academic governance, and so these departments, while being critical to executive corporate decision making of the institution, do not have the same significant role as the registry or quality functions in supporting academic governance.

The study examines professionalisation using a definition that is articulated in terms of role and decision making. A limitation of the study might be whether the questions around role and decision making adequately capture the nuances of professionalisation in higher education, and whether the findings would have been altered significantly if other criteria had been used. Where this approach was immensely useful was not just in revealing the complexities of management for professional services managers, but in identifying the issues facing academic managers, particularly where their roles were rotational. This was not a primary aim of the study initially, but it emerged that this was a significant issue for both academic and professional services managers alike. The core research question is **"How are the roles and decision making of professional services managers in higher education evolving in relation to organisational structure and academic governance?"** The study has contributed to a greater understanding of how the professional services operate within higher education institutions, and in particular how professional services managers use their formal and informal influence to manage effectively. The investigation has pointed to implicit centralising trends of accountability within Universities, even though there are explicit discussions of decentralisation by the strategic centre. While all six institutions demonstrated a strongly consistent pattern across their varying

institutional types and sizes, the claims made for this trend should be cautious as six institutions are a small proportion of the whole, and the data are captured at a particular moment in time. The study is generalisable on the basis of a sound research design and the strong correlation of the roles interviewed, however sweeping claims could not be made that this process was taking place in the majority of higher education institutions, as there may be context specific factors that came into effect. Nevertheless the pattern is consistent and similarly repeated in each institution, and the quality of the data offers a depth of understanding.

Although the focus was on professional services managers, a number of interesting themes have emerged in relation to academic managers. In particular, the effect of rotational roles at Head of Department or Dean level and the growing organisational expectations of the individuals in these posts. Three of the six institutions had rotational academic managers, which is a small proportion of the total number of Universities in the UK. However, it constituted 50% of the sample investigated, and provided a useful comparator for non-rotational roles within the context of this study. The claims made about rotational roles need to be commensurate with the sample size and the particular attributes of each institution. However, some of the conclusions may have wider application, for example the effects on academic decision making, wider departmental planning and management of the academic community are likely to be generalisable findings. For these reasons, the concept of *New Collegiality* is also likely to be generalisable.

The study therefore offers a modest commentary on interpretation of roles and individual and organisational decision making, and proposes the emergence of new collegial behaviour. The findings also point to increased accountability of departments within centralising and decentralising organisational contexts. There are also some wider observations on whether such changes are inevitable, or desirable, and with some consideration that the legitimation of actions may not reflect the underlying motivations that lead to them. The professionalisation of higher education management has emerging features that could become topics for future research, and these are discussed in the next chapter.

6 Chapter Six - Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter reflects on the overall outcomes in terms of whether the findings have answered the research questions to successfully meet the aims of the study. Consideration is given to a wider application of the insight gained, specifically whether findings in this particular context are resonant with higher education in general. The concluding arguments are brought together, leading to ideas on potential directions for future research, with a commentary on the implications for professional practice.

6.2 The implications of professionalisation and academic change

The key findings of the study can be considered along the main themes relating to shifts in decision making authority within complex organisational structures, and the professionalisation of both academic and professional services managers, which is contributing to the emergence of a *New Collegiality*. The analysis has also offered some observations about aspects of higher education on a broader level.

Organisational structure and decision making shifts

Organisations are ostensibly decentralising their structures, but are actually centralising decision making through an intermediate tier that is given greater authority over departments. In parallel with these changes, the requirements placed on both academic and professional services managers are increasing the accountability of academic departments. It appears there is growing use of three linked levers of management that are used by the strategic centre to achieve a simultaneous decentralisation of structure and centralisation of decision making. These linked levers consist of the creation of an intermediate tier such as a faculty or college, the proactive use of management information as an evidential tool for decision making, and the use of the *higher education professional services framework* to operationalise strategic institutional decisions. The three mechanisms are constantly calibrating themselves against each other, combining to form a pattern where

the outcome of one dynamic strengthens the effectiveness of the other two levers, on behalf of the strategic centre.

From a wider perspective, it is interesting to note that even though mechanisms are being put in place to increase central control, the arguments put forward by the strategic executive focus on the devolution of authority and increased profile of departments. The centre recognises that departments are the generators of University vitality, and this must not be disrupted by disaffection and lack of engagement, so a delicate balance is constantly struck. This dynamic is perhaps more significant in Universities than in other organisations, where a centrally driven model of management is much more acceptable. Reasons as to why this might be the case are likely to relate to the identity and culture of academic staff, and the symbiotic relationship between academic creativity and the right to consultation in shaping decision making. Departmental disenchantment with the centre may suppress the fundamental generation of academic ideas and research that Universities need as their core drivers. Organisations outside higher education are less reliant on this type of intellectual activity, as they are more service driven and with outcomes designed for consumers or service users to receive, which perhaps lends itself more to a command driven structure. The level of central steerage will vary between institutions across the sector, depending on a number of factors. The findings suggest movement away from the accepted structures of University management as increasingly the locus of control rests with a small group of senior managers. It is a possible oligarchy where governors, academic staff and students are not included, contrasting with the much wider representation of a Senate, Governing Council or Academic Board. This suggests that the formal model of University management may not fully apply in practice and although these bodies exist, decision making is in reality taking place elsewhere.

The dynamic between central authority and academic culture can also be discussed through the use of management information as a decision making tool. This is a well established principle in the wider organisational literature, yet it is interesting to consider why this approach has taken so long to become established within higher education. The distinguishing features between Universities and other organisations are the stimulation of research and ideas alongside collegial decision making involving extensive consultation with an

independently minded academic community. Historically, this decision making has not relied on management information to form a view, rather it has been based on expertise in particular subject areas, which was often difficult to challenge by those outside the discipline. This historical lack of penetration of management information in higher education is changing because of increased accountability pressures from national funding and quality assurance agencies, where the sector will have to comply with national requirements to publish extensive information on institutions. The government has directed the Funding Bodies to build data sets that rely heavily on standardised and theoretically comparable information across institutions, which will result in a data driven approach across the higher education sector. Another reason for an increase in the use of management information is the growing presence of professional services managers who are able to interpret it effectively, so it can be used by institutions within an increasingly target driven environment. These internal and external drivers will ensure that management information will continue to be used to inform decision making, although constraints to its effectiveness within Universities need to be recognised.

Professionalisation of Universities and their staff

In evaluating a wider process of professionalisation of institutions, there is a clear impact of management information and how it is changing the nature of decision making within the professionalisation context. The institutional impact of management information on decision making processes appears to be growing. Information is more reliable, it is interpreted with greater confidence, and organisations have become more willing to act on the outcomes. In broad terms, organisational decisions are becoming increasingly evidence based while using a more consistent methodology, and higher education managers are becoming more adept at interpreting what the implications may be. There is growing confidence in the reliability of the decision making process itself and a greater ability to benchmark against the sector, therefore using market intelligence more strategically.

The professionalisation of higher education management raises issues for academic managers in relation to the tenure of their roles. The rotational aspect of some Heads of Department roles has a number of managerial

consequences for both the individual and the organisation. Typically, these involve conflicts between research pressures and management demands, reduced authority to see through controversial decisions, and an impaired ability to plan long term. This places rotational academic managers in a challenging position that is not faced by their professional services counterparts, and raises issues for institutional academic governance. Those academic managers who value managerial skills are becoming similar in their views to professional services managers, and there is a sense of an increasing alignment between professional services managers and academic managers at Head of Department level. Historically, this alignment and sense of shared outlook has been present at the strategic centre (Shattock 2003; Deem 2006; Whitchurch 2006) but less so at departmental level. If this is shifting in the way the study discovered, the commonality of view between academic and professional services managers is rippling outwards from the strategic centre to the departments.

In terms of the professionalisation of professional services managers, this study has on the specific interactions between the strategic use of the professional services alongside changes in organisational structure and decision making in higher education institutions. A concept of a *higher education professional services framework*, where characteristics that are unique to the professional services combine with decision making actions and behaviours to operate as a singular body positioned throughout the organisation. A situationally contingent flexibility gives the professional services framework a responsive durability. If used in a particular way, this framework will also advance the increasing professionalisation of departmental administration staff, and their integration into a wider structure supported by senior professional services managers.

Core elements of professionalism relate to an established body of knowledge that is applied to protect the interests of others, with a sense of common good and an altruistic ideology. These features have been discussed in relation to how they might be understood by different communities within a University, and it is also valuable to consider wider ethical aspects of professionalisation. For example, it is arguable that the fundamental tenets of a University are the

creation and advancement of understanding which allows the teaching of students at the boundaries of knowledge, making a University a distinctive body unlike others. Preserving the essence and principle of higher education becomes a significant aspect of the professionalism of the staff working within Universities, how they see their individual professional role and the way in which it belongs to a collective professional group, with attendant norms and values. The professional obligation to particular principles of higher education provides an ethical dimension to professionalisation, and because it is innate to the professionalism of staff themselves, it can become a powerful self regulator. Alongside the fundamentals of a University, there is also the notion of service to a client. Higher education has many stakeholders: students, their parents, taxpayers, the government all have an interest in the wider higher education sector and can reasonably argue that as key stakeholders, professionalisation of Universities should take account of their interests in one form or another.

A related concept lies in understanding what is necessary for Universities to be able to survive in an increasingly prescriptive regulatory environment and funding regime. It might be proposed that within this directive context, certain aspects of professionalisation are a necessary response because Universities are obliged to equip themselves in particular ways in order to meet external demands. This appears to increase executive and corporate influence, and raises the importance of management information as an evidential tool for decision making. Furthermore, not only are institutions pushed to develop evidential decision making internally, government steerage is directing that Universities are increasingly externally measured using standardised data. It can therefore be seen that institutions are under significant pressure to respond to their environment in particular ways.

However, although the arguments above are valid, significant complexity prevails within higher education, and it should be acknowledged that there may be other conceptual approaches that Universities might follow. A range of alternative ideologies could be used by a University to define itself, and perhaps at its heart there is no single idea of the University. Universities have undergone vast evolutionary change over hundreds of years, and there is no

reason to think that this process will end. It is possible that one of the greatest challenges facing Universities is for each institution to understand itself well enough in the present to conceptualise where it is heading. This means that Universities in the future may look very different from Universities of the present, and many argue that bold and innovative thinking is required to contemplate these possibilities. This study was a contemporary and empirical evaluation of institutions, which had adopted institutional patterns of behaviour they perceived to be necessary to navigate through the current higher education environment. This does not minimise the significance of the wider ethical dimension of professionalisation, but it creates tensions when there are internal and external pressures that conflict with the ethos and sense of a "higher good" of higher education, which is deeply shared by both academic and professional services staff. Even in times of great contextual change, this professionalism obliges them to protect the core purpose and values of a University, and such an ethos faces particular challenges in environments that are target driven along standardised frameworks that do not take account of the diversity and range of institutions across the sector. The outcomes of the study generate a number of observations of relevance to a wider context.

"New Collegiality" and academic change

These organisational behaviours suggest an evolving professionalisation of higher education management, alongside an emerging *New Collegiality* that can take different forms. It is a developing pattern between academic and professional services managers as they engage as peers in shared decision making, on matters of organisational business and corporate planning. One of the strongest elements is that *New Collegiality* is also evident amongst academic managers with their academic colleagues, as they use their critical evaluation and peer review skills in management areas rather than academic subject disciplines. There is also sharing of managerial good practice amongst academic managers. This appears to emerge more readily when departments are grouped together as part of a faculty and organisational resources are shared. There is a long standing tradition amongst the academic community of collaboration in research and teaching, but this way

of working has been less evident in matters of academic management and planning. *New Collegiality* can also emerge from the decision making process itself, where Heads of Department share expertise in order to learn how to make management decisions in particular ways that demonstrate an increasing alignment with professional services managers.

A wider significance of *New Collegiality* is that it may well strengthen Universities in two particular areas. Firstly, there may be an ability for institutions to respond holistically to their environment, because *New Collegiality* is based on a broad evidence base alongside innovative approaches to decision making. These aspects are then complemented by the way peer groups are formed within *New Collegiality,* as they are established to meet particular priorities and so are likely to have high level of fitness for purpose for particular decision making. Taken together, these aspects may not only equip Universities to respond to their current environment, but it can be argued they may also make anticipation of future change more likely.

Secondly, it is worth considering the contribution of *New Collegiality* to the professionalisation of higher education. Features of professionalism have been defined as the establishment of a body of knowledge, the development of skilled expertise and the strong sense of a shared service ethic. Ways in which *New Collegiality* might complement professionalism is by expanding a body of knowledge into new areas, as well as offering novel perspectives on existing professional knowledge. In order to be successful, the collegial concept also espouses collaboration and recognition of the value set of participants, which is likely to reinforce the ethical aspect of professionalism. Because *New Collegiality* encourages the sharing of expertise and good practice in new peer groups, it creates opportunities for the development of professional skills using novel approaches. This may then lead to a constructive redefining of the professional skills base, with positive outcomes for professionalisation.

The study drew links between decision making based on evidence and transparent decision making processes, both formal and informal. It could be

argued that the findings present a particularly rational view of decision making and that the real world is rarely so neat. This aligns with the concept of organisations as natural systems, where they espouse specific goals, but the behaviour of participants is frequently not guided by them. It also picks up a contrast between legitimation in terms of how an action is presented in terms of the reasons given, and motivation in terms of its actual reasoning. The creation of an intermediate tier is a possible example of this. Resistance to change exists in Universities just as it does in any organisation, and particular groups may argue against decisions out of self interest, irrespective of contradictory evidence. Combine this with a sense of individual and collective autonomy that is an inherent aspect of University culture, academic freedom and subject expertise, and there are powerful forces that can impede the strategic executive. Data and evidence can always be challenged within the higher education context because of its inherent complexity and lack of boundaries. There is often debate about how aspects of higher education can be measured, for example, programme costs, workload models and teaching time, which will inevitably lead to challenges both on the accuracy of the data itself, and whether or not it actually adds to an understanding of the situation. In this context, one respondent made a succinct observation on the need to avoid an over reliance on management information:

"You may have met a target but you haven't changed anything."
(Head of Quality)

Furthermore, measuring outcomes are more difficult when these are also affected by input from student effort into their own learning. An increasing consumerism in higher education due to tuition fee increases, diversified income generation and an increasingly competitive market adds to the complexity of measuring success. In particular, the two primary aspects of research performance and teaching quality are very difficult to measure accurately, yet they have huge significance within higher education. So while management information is a useful tool its limits should also be acknowledged.

Wider observations should be set within a context of the increasing effects of resource constraints. A complex dynamic of increases in the costs of higher

education administration, varying definitions of what constitutes administration and the professional services, may result in different interpretations of the rate of increase. Rising costs during times of resource difficulty will inevitably have a significant impact on organisational decision making and professionalisation. Universities have strong traditions of management by consensus, but this requires staff time and resource to manage. The growth in costs of the professional services may be a consequence of the need to respond to the environment in terms of regulation, support for income diversification and market competitiveness. In the current financial climate, every area will need to demonstrate the value they bring to the organisation, and it is appropriate that the professional services will be scrutinised particularly closely as their activity is secondary to the core activity of teaching and research. It may be that the creation of the intermediate tier brings added costs, and if departments are being held more accountable by the centre this also increases administrative costs for them. Potentially these costs could be offset by sharing resources at faculty level. It is likely that Universities will more explicitly align departmental activity with income and expenditure. The strategic centre may take a view that costs go up in some areas, but the greater institutional steer and centralising of decision making maintains closer control of University spending overall, and enables targeted investment alongside identifiable cost constraints.

6.3 Potential themes for future research and professional practice

In discussing the findings, certain ideas can be proposed for potentially worthwhile research both for development of theory, and at a more applied level to inform the implications for professional practice.

Potential themes for future research

Several themes for future research have emerged from the findings. These could add to the understanding of higher education management and include:

- Developing greater insight into the characteristics, dynamics and wider implications of an emerging *New Collegiality*

- Further testing of the concept of the *higher education professional services framework* and how it operates within institutions
- Research into the effects of rotational academic manager roles on long term academic and executive planning
- An evaluation of the impact and use of management information by the strategic centre to achieve institutional objectives

Potential research could follow up on the three aspects of *New Collegiality* that have been identified. A study of academic managers who together are using *New Collegiality* to engage in traditional collegial debate on new areas that are outside subject disciplines. This would complement studies on academic Heads of Department who are working collaboratively within their subject disciplines as part of new organisational structures, rather than separate academic departments. Future research would also offer insight into academic and professional services managers who act as peers and together demonstrate a *New Collegiality* both as individuals and groups, to discuss matters of management that can be related to subject disciplines or of a wider institutional nature. A particular insight might be gained into the impact of *New Collegiality* on organisational behaviour and wider professionalisation. In particular, research could evaluate how far holistic thinking is achieved through *New Collegiality*, and the nature of any impact this might have on decision outcomes.

The study has suggested a notion of a *higher education professional services framework* that links together key aspects of managerial decision making behaviour. This could also be developed further to learn more of the cohesive structure that enables the organisation to achieve institutional aims. The additional idea of three mutually reinforcing levers of management used by the institution that link the *professional services framework* with the creation of an intermediate tier, using management information as evidence for decisions is worthy of greater exploration.

Further work to investigate the impact of the rotational role of academic managers, and their effect on decision making could consider Deans but may

yield more insight if the initial focus was on Heads of Department. These roles are more likely to be rotational within an institution. Examining the outcomes of rotational Dean roles would increase understanding of the links between faculties and the centre. Evaluating rotational Head of Department roles may offer insight into links between strategic and operational decision making, and its academic implementation. The study suggests that when academic managers are appointed on a rotational basis, this reduces their ability to make longer term decisions that extend beyond the duration of the rotation, and that controversial decisions are more difficult to implement. This applies to the managers themselves, their colleagues and the institution. Future research could examine how the ability to undertake longer term planning or forecasting is affected by rotational academic management, particularly in relation to rapidly changing external environments and resource constraints. This would then offer a contribution to a debate around whether or not such roles are sustainable. New collegiality indicates a trend for academic managers, with their peer review and evaluation skills normally associated with subject disciplines, to apply these academic skills to more managerial areas. This could be the subject of further research to determine its nature and extent, and could also be used to inform the ways in which such developments might contribute to the wider professionalisation of higher education management.

The impact of management information on decision making outcomes and processes appears to be growing, and there were several indications of this in the study. Future research could examine the mutually reinforcing loop suggested by the analysis. This positive feedback loop occurs when management information enables effective organisational operation to take place, and this itself reinforces the accuracy and nature of the management information. The insight yielded by such studies may become particularly significant in terms of targeting reduced resources, and with increased market influences on higher education. The study has demonstrated links between increasing use of data by the strategic centre to manage Universities. There are indications that institutions are learning to make decisions in new ways and this could be investigated further, for example with consideration of links between evidential decision making and the implementation of outcomes.

There are therefore several themes that could be taken forward as areas of current higher education activity that may merit further research.

Implications for professional practice

The implications for professional practice align with the potential directions for research. In terms of a resource constrained and turbulent higher education sector, there are four key characteristics that resilient institutions should develop. These include the need to ***establish distinct institutional missions*** to distinguish themselves from their competitors, and to deal with the environment in the most individually appropriate way. In a sector based on diversity and its contribution to intellectual creativity, distinctiveness is valued both as an overarching principle as well as a way of carving a niche in a competitive market. Establishing such a mission is likely to involve a ***strategic review of the academic portfolio,*** a clear sense of strategic direction in developing new subject areas, or closing departments, which may be a more likely outcome of a context where financial limitations are having a greater influence on academic development.

The impact of resource constraints is significant as government measures take effect, so higher education institutions are under increasing pressure to ***reduce organisational operating costs*****,** which will be a significant challenge to many institutions. If financial challenges and volatile environment are shaping an unfavourable higher education climate, the professionalisation of both academic and professional services staff will be an integral contributor to institutional success. Higher education is fundamentally about advancing knowledge through research and teaching students, so any successful institution should therefore have clearly articulated ***institutional strategies to improve the student experience*****.** There are three main aspects to such strategies, firstly assessing the student experience accurately and having measures in place to address any issues raised, secondly, developing the academic provision in a distinctive way that is tied into the institutional mission, and finally to manage student administration through its natural life cycle of admission through to alumni relations.

The implications for professional practice are set within the wider context of institutional mission, academic portfolio, reducing costs and student experience, and are expressed at the three levels of the institution, the intermediate tier, and at departmental level.

Implications at Institutional level The professional services can contribute to the development of a distinct institutional mission through their external knowledge, and interpretation of information. In developing distinctiveness from the rest of the sector, an organisation first has to know what is already out in its environment and the implications for professional practice are that benchmarking becomes a critical activity. Benchmarking practice also supports strategic reviews of the academic portfolio, and market intelligence in terms of student demand and government policy. An institutional overview and the fact that the professional services are neutral in terms of subject allegiance, can assist with contentious decisions, particularly if the closure of academic departments is a potential outcome.

In terms of the professional practice of academic managers, institutions could evaluate the historical aspects of rotational Heads of Department roles, and identify the costs and benefits to the institution. In particular, how decision making and longer term planning is affected, which would link to potential areas for future research. Once an institution has captured this data, serious consideration could be given to whether academic managers should be appointed to permanent posts supported by structured staff development. Alongside this should be institutional recognition of management skills and the creation of distinct career progression points for academic staff who become managers. This relates closely to the wider point of developing a distinctive individual mission, which cannot be simply about expansive thinking at senior levels of the institution. If the strategic centre is to convince the academic community at a pragmatic level, then such shifts have be manifested in practical steps at every level of the organisation. Institutions should consider how they recognise the managerial demands on academic managers, by offering role status with agreed expectations of lower numbers of research outputs for particular staff who hold posts with managerial responsibilities. This aspect is also related to defining the institutional mission,

and explicit judgements on the balance between prestigious research income and higher tuition fee income. These elements will directly inform institutional research and portfolio strategies, and the resulting organisational expectations of academic managers.

Staff development programmes could train academic staff in the interpretation of management information in its widest sense, which would also be facilitated by the establishment of a forum specifically for managerial discussions and mutual staff support. Heads of Department would benefit from collegial input from academic peers about matters of management, including financial and executive forward planning. This would support the institutional mission and review of the academic portfolio, but it would also play a role in reducing operating costs, as academic managers developed a range of information interpretation and management skills. The institution could use such staff development as an opportunity for professional services managers and academic managers to work together collegially. It would further strengthen good professional relations, and allow certain skills of professional services managers to support academic managers.

Faculty/College implications The intermediate tier could make a key contribution to the institutional agenda by bringing together Heads of Department for staff development specifically designed to support their managerial skills, with increased local relevance and subject specific considerations. Because of this such an approach may also achieve more engagement with programme based academic staff. Where rotational roles exist, local knowledge can be used to build supportive links between experienced Heads of Department to offer mentoring support to less experienced colleagues. This is more likely within a faculty structure containing several departments, than a divisionalised departmental structure where cross departmental working of this type is harder to achieve.

An implication for professional practice is for Faculty/College Registrars or other senior administrators to provide staff development for Departmental Administrators and related staff. This will extend the view of the administrative teams beyond their own departments which will have a particular benefit for

the professionalisation of the professional services. Furthermore, if an issue for departmental administration is around a potential sense of detachment from the wider administrative community, professional services managers in the intermediate tier have a key role to play. They can act as a conduit between central and local strands of the professional services, and are well placed to support professionalisation in its varying forms and at different levels of the organisation. Key to a successful approach might be the identification of benefits to Departmental Administrators early on in the process. Sharing of good practice between departmental administrative staff will offer mutual support, but also in highlighting the way the wider professional services can support career progression, staff development, secondments, guidance and access to senior administrators as role models. Furthermore, a sense of the faculty as an overarching body to offer support may be helpful to staff facing difficult problems, and understanding the role of the faculty enables departmental staff to appreciate the wider picture at the intermediate tier. It then becomes easier for staff to have a sense of the institution as a whole, which of itself supports the professionalisation agenda. All these aims are much harder to achieve for administrators who operate using narrowly frames of reference within a department, with less awareness of institutional activity.

Implications at Department level In terms of institutional strategies to improve the student experience, the students' primary engagement is with their academic programme, and in this respect the department has a critical role to play. The term "student experience" was originally used in a fairly way to describe the student experience of the academic programme, and how it operated within the department. This term is now used more widely to encompass not just the experience of the academic subject area, but also the department and institution as a whole, including for example the library, student services and other facilities. This places a greater emphasis on the institution to provide an overall offering, as it can no longer rely solely on the academic excellence of departments to perhaps divert attention away from less favourable areas of the institution.

There are two particular reasons why this is relevant to the professionalisation agenda and its implications for departments. Firstly, the increasing market pressures on higher education, and the significant fees paid by students introduces a commercial element into the relationship between student and the department. Students will increasingly see themselves as consumers, and their payment of tuition fees as a material investment in their future employment. They will expect a professional service (in its widest sense) from both department and institution, which will increase the pressure for professionalisation at each level of the organisation, to meet a greater customer focus.

Secondly, if departmental staff are aware of the professionalisation process taking place within their institution, they will be better able to deal with it at department level. For example, students from different departments will compare and contrast their experiences, and individual departments cannot ignore the impact of student satisfaction through key channels such as the National Student Survey. The implications for practice at departmental level are likely to lead to a growing awareness of student engagement beyond academic activity. It is completely fitting that the student relationship is with the programme team and the subject discipline above all else, and the most successful departments will always be underpinned by academic strength in teaching and research. The departments that are also able to recognise the impact of professionalising trends will be able build on this academic success even further.

Another group of staff with significant student contact are Departmental Administrators, who play a key role in the student experience on a day to day basis. Due to geography, historical line management reasons or departmental focus, these roles can sometimes operate in isolation from wider administrative structures. This has a number of effects, including possible detachment from the increasing professionalisation of the professional services elsewhere in the institution. In terms of the implications for professional practice and professionalisation, possible co-location of departmental administrators from different departments has a key impact on sharing of expertise and good practice. This co-location can be built upon by

reconstruction of administrative teams, and possibly bringing them together under the line management of senior administrators. This is a key implication for professional practice, as the study suggests that professionalisation of departmental administration is far less likely if line management remains with academic Heads of Department. There are other implications in delivering institutional objectives at departmental level, with an under professionalised administrative tier and the lost opportunities that might result from this.

Mentoring by senior staff as junior colleagues gain academic research and teaching experience is established practice. Building on this, departments could develop mentoring schemes where academic staff are also supported and encouraged in areas of executive management as well as research in their subject disciplines. This would assist all ranges of staff in acknowledging the managerial skills of Heads of Department and not to judge research outputs as the only way to be a high performing academic manager. Allied to this is an acceptance that sound academic management by Heads of Department creates an environment that allows supported opportunities for all academic activity. This facilitates the research outputs of every staff member in the department, and formally acknowledging this may well be an outcome of increasing professionalisation.

In conclusion, this thesis reflects on professionalisation and decision making in higher education management, and how a concept of *New Collegiality* is emerging from a context of significant academic change. There is also a sense that professionalisation is an inevitable trend within higher education, and if managed properly by both academic and professional services managers it is a positive development. Roles will adapt and develop, alongside decision making that strengthens institutional success. The current context is one of mass higher education, significantly reduced public sector funding, increasing government regulation, a challenging market and a student body that is growing in both diversity and influence. Appropriate professionalisation recognises the primacy of intellectual creativity by the subject specialist, while acknowledging the significant contribution of wider management. *New Collegiality* embraces these principles to support Universities and their staff as they adapt to complex and rapidly changing environments.

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Appendix One - Interview Questions December 2009- March 2010

RQ 1 Changes in Boundaries
How are the role and boundaries of professional services managers changing their relationships with academic staff?

1 Please briefly describe your role

2 Describe any recent significant changes in your role

3 How do you use your role to influence others?

- Distinguish between academic and administrative staff
- Specifically link the effects of organisational structure on boundaries of influence of the role

4 Are there any differences between a professional services manager's role and an academic manager's role?

5 How do academic and administrative staff perceive each other?

- At central institutional level
- At local level

RQ 2 Effects of Organisational Structure
What are the effects of centralisation or decentralisation on how professional services managers carry out their role?

6 How is your organisation structured in terms of how it is centralised or decentralised. Have there been any recent changes to this structure?

7 What are the effects of centralised or decentralised organisational structure on the way your role is carried out?

- Networks – lateral relationships, formal/informal communication
- Use of formal or informal organisational structures

8 What are the effects of centralised or decentralised organisational structure when working as part of a specific project?

- Who participates
- Cross functional working
- Types and range of projects

RQ 3 Changes in Boundaries
How is decision making changing in terms of information gathering, selection between alternative options and implementation of decisions?

Consider a decision or project that you have undertaken recently that involved both academic and professional services managers, and had significant implications for your University

Information gathering

9 When gathering information on the decision, how were boundaries of the decision framed?

- Effects of centralisation and decentralisation
- Objectives - Likely outcome of each option

Selection of alternatives

10 How were the alternative courses of action considered/chosen when making the decision?

- Effects of centralisation and decentralisation
- Prioritising mechanism
- Timescales

Effective Implementation of decisions

11 How were key elements of the decision implementation addressed

- Effects of centralisation and decentralisation
- Timescales
- Staff commitment - Participation
- Understanding of objectives - Communication

RQ 4 Effects of Organisational Structure
What are the effects of centralised or devolved organisational structure on the decision making of professional services managers?

12 What shifts do you detect in authoritative decision making between different roles/groups within the institution

- Role of academic and administrative mangers in decision making

13 How are outcomes affected by any shifts in authoritative decision making?

14 Are there any links between shifts in authoritative decision making and levels of centralisation in the organisation?

- Decision making groups
- Influence of Professional Mangers on Decision Making

15 Describe the key committees or groups that are responsible for decisions relating to academic governance

16 How is the devolution of academic governance to departments reconciled with accountability for quality at institutional level?

Overall Context – Higher education Sector as a Whole

17 Do professional managers across the sector form a discernable group underpinned by shared Values, Skills and Knowledge

18 Are there any differences between University management and other public sector management - On what is your view based?

- Previous experience
- Personal research
- Media

19 What makes management in higher education distinctive

20 Any other relevant issues not already covered

Appendix Two – Focus Group Study **May to August 2009**

Criteria for assessment of organisational (de)centralisation in relation to key aspects of academic governance.

Introduction

Higher education is undergoing a period of rapid and intense change. Shifts to mass higher education, a diversified student body and increasing regulation and accountability have all combined to create a complex and changeable environment. To support institutional responsiveness, a body of managers with a specific skill set, is emerging from the ranks of University administration. This suggests a shift from the "civil service" model of academic administration towards more proactive and professional management that is specifically directed towards the particular needs of higher education.

The research will examine how such managers see developments in their identity and decision making function, and how resulting changes in their professional boundaries are affecting decision making to ensure sound academic governance. The study is set within a context of both centralised and decentralised Universities, to determine whether the levels of centralisation or devolution of authority have a direct bearing on the professionalisation of management. The central research question is **"How are the roles and decision making of professional services managers in higher education evolving in relation to organisational structure and academic governance?"** From this core research question, greater understanding will be gained of how higher education is professionalising, and how decisions are made within complex organisational structures.

The academic governance framework of a University can be used to measure its organisational structure because teaching and research form the fundamental activities of an academic institution, and so are representative of how it structurally organises itself. A focus group of experts in higher education has been established to consider a range of institutions across the UK, and to comment on whether these institutions are organisationally centralised or decentralised in certain key functions.

Members are considered as experts for the following reasons:

- They have involvement in current developments and an awareness of future issues, in the wider higher education sector
- They have sound knowledge of the requirements of academic governance
- The panel as a whole will have extensive and relevant experience of a range of Universities in the UK, and the levels of autonomy present in the academic departments within these institutions
- Panel members have an understanding of the structure and process of organisational decision making within higher education

Universities will be grouped into either centralised or decentralised categories using five key elements of institutional academic governance:

- Development and resourcing of the academic portfolio
- Undergraduate admissions
- Programme approval, monitoring and review
- Academic governance of assessment
- Institutional committee decision making framework

Six institutions will be selected for further study, three institutions that have centralised decision making, and three that have authority for governance devolved to departments. Semi structured interviews will be conducted in the six institutions.

Although there is extensive research on the identity and role of “manager-academics”, there is less evidence on changes to the roles of managers within the professional services. In particular, whether institutional centralisation or devolution of authority affects the changing boundaries and decision making by professional managers as they engage with academic colleagues to achieve institutional objectives. This area has not yet been explored, and will offer new perspectives and understanding.

Focus Group Questionnaire **May 2009**

Criteria for grouping institutions according to levels of centralisation

The following factors are fundamental to sound academic governance:

Development and resourcing of the academic portfolio
Undergraduate admissions
Programme approval, monitoring and review
Academic governance of assessment
Committee decision making framework

Each factor has three elements expressed in terms of levels of centralisation between the central structures and academic departments of the institution.

Definition of "Centre" – Any centrally based service (Academic Registry, Quality Office or Admissions Department) or decision making body (Vice Chancellor's Office, Senate/Academic Board committees, institutional groups).

Definition of "Departments" – The academic units responsible for delivering research and teaching, although departments form the basic academic unit, for this purpose in distinguishing local activity from central activity, the definition also includes faculties and schools.

Scoring indicators

3 = Highly centralised decision making
2 = Some centralisation, some devolved authority
1 = Decentralisation and devolution of authority

1 Development and resourcing of the academic portfolio	**Overall Score**
1.1 Approval of the portfolio of academic programmes	
Departmental portfolio can only be approved by the centre	3
Portfolio is approved either by the departments or the centre	2
Departments have complete autonomy to approve their own academic portfolio	1
1.2 Portfolio resourcing and budgetary control	
Budgetary control of portfolio development lies with the centre	3
Portfolio development is resourced by both departments and the centre	2
Departments have full control of resourcing for portfolio development	1
1.3 Autonomy in maintenance of the academic portfolio	
The centre retains overall authority to close down programmes	3
Programmes may be terminated by either the centre or the departments	2
Departments have autonomy in ending or sustaining programme provision	1

2 Undergraduate admissions	Overall Score

2.1 Entry requirements set institutionally or locally

Entry requirements for all programmes are set by the centre	3
Entry requirements may be set by either the departments or the centre	2
Departments determine their own entry requirements without reference to the centre	1

2.2 Formal offers issued by the centre or departments

Formal offers can only be made through centrally managed admissions services	3
Formal offers may be made by departments or through central admissions	2
Departments have authority to make formal offers independently of the centre	1

2.3 Levels of autonomy with non-standard entry decisions

The centre retains control over decisions on non-standard applications	3
Non-standard entry decisions are made by both departments and the centre	2
Departments have autonomy to admit non-standard applicants	1

3 Programme approval, monitoring and review	Overall Score

3.1 Authority to validate and revalidate programmes

The centre controls all validation and revalidation processes and decisions	3
Validations may be conducted either through the centre or by departments	2
Departments have devolved authority to validate their own programmes	1

3.2 Levels of independence to monitor academic quality of programmes

Programmes are monitored through centrally run systems	3
Annual monitoring may be conducted either by the departments or the centre	2
Departments independently monitor their own programmes	1

3.3 Systems for ensuring externality in academic subject review

Periodic academic review is conducted through the centre to ensure externality	3
Academic reviews may be conducted either by the centre or the departments	2
The departments have autonomy to conduct their own academic reviews	1

4 Academic governance of assessment Overall Score

4.1 Examination board management and autonomy of decision making

Marks are submitted to exam boards run by central registry teams	3
Exam boards are run locally but with a central presence	2
Departments have complete autonomy in the decision making of exam boards	1

4.2 Regulations drafted and applied across the University

Regulations are centrally agreed, and applied consistently in all areas of the institution	3
Institutional regulations exist, but departments may also draft their own	2
Departments have devolved authority to operate to local regulations	1

4.3 Notification of results made by departments or a central Registry

Notification of results is controlled centrally	3
Results may be published by either the departments or the centre	2
Departments independently notify students of results	1

5 Institutional committee decision making framework Overall Score

5.1 Institutional influence on departmental decision making

Institutional level committees strongly shape departmental business	3
No clear devolution exists, partial institutional control of departmental decision making	2
Institutional committee constitution and terms of reference confirm departmental autonomy	1

5.2 Influence of the academic departments through key roles

Deans are strongly represented at institutional level	3
Some local roles may carry influence, but the formal structure is variable	2
Deans have limited representation at institutional level	1

5.3 Institutional control of departmental engagement with external examiners

External examiner comments and departmental responses are overseen centrally	3
Partial institutional control, some authority devolved to departments	2
There is no/minimal involvement of the institution with departmental external examiners	1

Summary

Overall scores for each factor, ranging from 3 to 9

1 Development and resourcing of the academic portfolio
2 Undergraduate admissions
3 Programme approval, monitoring and review
4 Academic governance of assessment
5 Institutional committee decision making framework

Total for each institution, ranging from 15 to 45

Higher scores will indicate a greater degree of centralisation, based on the following scale:

Highly centralised decision making	Range 35 - 45
Partially centralised, or where levels of autonomy are mixed	Range 25 - 34
Decentralised, indicating high levels of departmental autonomy	Range 15 - 24

The overall scores give an indication of levels of centralisation only. Institutional groupings should reflect the panel's professional judgement taking into account members' combined expertise, skills and experience.

Many thanks for your time and participation in this project

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May 2009

End of Thesis
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